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THE
ROMANCE OF HISTORY.

Spain.

BY DON T. DE TRUEBA.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.



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1837.



THE
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Spain.

BY DON T. DE TRUEBA.

WITH TWENTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS.

BY J. K. MEADOWS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Alonzo the Eighth, 1158, to Ferdinand the Third, 1257.

1158. ALONZO, or as Spanish historians call him, Alphonso, the Eighth, surnamed the Noble, was only three years old when his father, Sancho the Third, died. Some differences arose in Castile concerning the guardianship of the young king, between the powerful houses of Lara and Castro, which Don Fernando, king of Aragon, thought favourable to his project of uniting the two kingdoms. He entered the infant king's dominions, took possession of Burgos, and pursued the Laras, who had the king in their power, to Soria. Alonzo was saved and kept in safety in Avila, until his eleventh year, when he began to exercise his regal functions.

1170. Alonzo being of age, assembled the Cortes of the kingdom at Burgos — there the king was solemnly recognized, and a treaty entered upon concerning his marriage with Eleanor of England, daughter of Henry the Second.

1195. This year, on the 19th of July, a most sanguinary battle was fought at Alarcos, between the Moors and the Christians.—Yacub led the former; and though Alonzo and his knights fought gallantly, the day proved one of the most disastrous to the Christian name since the invasion of Tarif; the slaughter was great, especially amongst the Christians. Yacub entered Alarcos, Calatrava, and Guadalajara.

1197. A quarrel took place between the kings of Castile and Leon, concerning the right of appointing the Grand

Master of the order of Santiago. The king of Leon, aided by the Moors, ravaged Castile, and besieged Toledo, but in vain.

1212. The memorable battle and splendid victory of the Nava of Tolosa, was fought and won this year. The Christians obtained a complete triumph; and from that glorious day the power of the Moors began sensibly to decline. The loss of the Moors was horrible; some say more than a hundred thousand men; whilst the Christians only lost twenty-five men; this, however, must be placed in the list of the miracles of that day. It is from this time that the kings of Castile have borne the golden castle of their arms in a red field. Three bishops distinguished themselves in this battle.

1214. Alonzo died, leaving an infant ten years of age to inherit his throne. Alonzo was one of the most chivalrous characters that adorn the Spanish history; his life was romantic, and rendered interesting by the story of the unfortunate Jewess, Rachel, which is admitted as true by credible historians, though treated by many others as fabulous.

1217. Young King Henry died by the falling of a tile upon his head; his short reign was disturbed, as usual in such cases, by struggles among the powerful houses to obtain possession of the reins of government. During his reign the council of St. John of Lateran was held, when Roderick, the archbishop of Toledo, astonished the assembled prelates by his learning and eloquence. On the death of the king, Doria Benenguela was recognized as heiress to the kingdom, being the daughter of King Alonzo the Eighth; she, however, reigned in favour of her son.

The Fair Jewess.

“ Pues si Raquel a Alfonso tiraniza,
Quien quebranta sus hierros y cadenas,
Quien a su rey liberta de un desdoro
No obra como leal ?”

HUERTA.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE FAIR JEWESS.

The Fair Jewess.

KING ALPHONSO the Eighth had retired from the Council Chamber to his private apartments. His exit had been contemplated by the assembled nobles with looks of sorrow and sentiments of scorn. As they were leaving the palace, one of the grandees accosted another, with an expression of deep indignation marked upon his features:—"How long, oh noble Hernan Garcia!" he said, "how long are the Castilians to submit to the degradation which oppresses them? How long shall the best in the land, the decendants of mighty heroes, bow their proud heads to the will of a base Jewish slave? How long is the great King Alphonso the Eighth, he who hath been the conqueror of princes, to remain in the ignominious bondage of an artful woman?"

"With shame and sorrow I confess," answered Hernan Garcia, "that the state of our country is indeed deplorable. I know not, Manrique de Lara, I know not what magic power has been used, so absolutely to enthrall the heart, soul, and strength, and, worse than all, the honour of our King. Alas! he is no longer worthy of that crown which he once wore with such glory to

himself and such benefit to Castile. We remember the time when his indefatigable valour in the field could only be equalled by his prudence and wisdom in council. Aye! we well remember that he was the first in danger, the last in retreat. His name was the herald of terror to the Moors, a blessing, a hope, a promise of good purport to his people; and that people, in return, poured out the loyal gratitude of their hearts in prayers for his safety. Such was Alphonso when the first bloom of youth encouraged him to grasp the reins of government, and assume a crown, the possession of which was associated with danger and endless toil. How changed is he from that Alphonso! I can scarcely credit the evidence of my senses; I labour to deceive myself into the hope of better things: but, alas! in vain. I see my King trampling upon our rights and privileges, striving to make us slaves, whilst he himself is the degraded toy of a woman. By the rood, it is a shameful spectacle! A brave knight, a King of Castile, sacrificing his glory, his honour, his people, all! all! to the base and enervating blandishments of a Jewess!"

"Thy zeal and indignation are just," resumed Manrique de Lara, "and I rejoice that we are of one opinion on this subject."

"And can there be more than one amongst the nobles of Castile?" exclaimed Hernan Garcia.

“I religiously hope that there cannot,” returned the other ; “the looks of our companions are grateful signs that their feelings are not dormant under the general evil, and those feelings only wait a slight impulse to exchange a sorrowful endurance into a glorious opposition. Noble and true Hernan Garcia de Castro, trust me, these things shall not be long unaltered.”

“What mean you ?” inquired the other.

“That a most efficient remedy for this evil is now in contemplation. Yes, the wrongs of Castile shall speedily be redressed : so God and the holy patron of our country aid us !”

“Lara ! Lara !” exclaimed Hernan Garcia, “I like not those words—surely there is no treason against the King. Whatever be his errors, we must not remedy our cause by crimes. Against revolt—against a violent attempt in prejudice of Alphonso, I shall strenuously declare myself.”

“Hold, noble Castilian,” said Lara, “you misapprehend and wrong me ; I harbour no treasonable thoughts in my bosom, and unjust were it to attribute such sentiments to a man who, like Manrique de Lara, has gallantly endured so many hardships, and fearlessly encountered so many perils in protecting the person of his sovereign from the attacks of usurpation. Discard all suspicion from your mind, my trusty Castilian, and believe that, whilst

we consult the interests of our country, we shall not forget what we owe to our King."

"'Tis well," said Garcia, reassured, "you may bespeak all my aid and concurrence."

"This night then," continued Lara, "you must meet me at the mansion of the brave Don Alvar Fañez ; there all the principal cavaliers of Castile assemble to discuss this important matter. There our views shall be disclosed for your approval. Till then, adieu, and now let us part, for yonder comes that loathsome, that hateful Jew, Ruben. But I must be wary, for the interest of our scheme requires it ; I must compress the gathering storm until the fit moment for explosion arrives ; and then, accursed Jew," he added, with a bitter smile, looking at the advancing Israelite, "thy doom shall be as horrible as the hatred and disgust thou dost inspire."

The two nobles separated as Ruben approached ; the Jew halted for an instant, and cast a proud glance of hatred and scorn upon the retreating cavaliers. His eyes glistened with the aversion of his heart and the consciousness of power.

"Curse me, proud Christians," he muttered, apostrophizing the Castilians, "pour forth all the venom of your souls in bitter maledictions and abuse, for I heed it not : my power now is as vast as your rage. Whilst Rachel lives, Alphonso is mine ; and whilst the King is mine, I laugh your resentment to scorn."

An insulting chuckle terminated this apostrophe, and he directed his steps towards the palace of Toledo.

King Alphonso the Eighth was so deeply absorbed in the gratification of his passion for the Jewess above alluded to, that his weakness was the occasion of the most melancholy results to his kingdom. Rachel, the object of this fatal attachment, was endowed with charms that might have enslaved the heart of a man much less passionate and generous than the King. She was indeed a miracle of beauty. The winning softness of her manner was in perfect accordance with the delicate freshness of her complexion ; while the brilliant fire of her eyes discovered to the careful observer, the pride which lurked within her heart. She was in the full bloom of youth, and so devotedly attached to the King, that he yielded himself entirely to her guidance, confident that nothing which a being so faithfully attached to him advised would militate with his interests.

It was not the dazzling allurements of empire that had seduced the heart of Rachel. When she first saw the King, he was enjoying in strict incognito the sport of the chase, of which he was passionately fond. The impression which his gallant bearing and winning manners made on the fair Jewess, was equal to the passion with which he in return was inspired by her beauty. This passion

could not but gather additional strength from the conviction that neither sordid interest nor proud ambition had awakened it. Alphonso was loved for himself alone, and not from any adventitious allurements which he might gather from his rank and power.

The King of Castile was so exclusively occupied in the pursuit of his love, that he completely neglected the affairs of the state. His temper and character seemed to have undergone a material change. His sports of hardihood had lost their charms. He no longer thirsted for the excitement of war or the glory of victory, and, softly rocked in the cradle of voluptuous pleasure, he was contented with the triumph of his love. But these enervating occupations, which in others would have been excused or passed over unobserved, in a sovereign, and the sovereign of Castile, could not but be productive of serious consequences. By the pernicious influence of the Jewess he was hurried on to adopt many measures so indiscreet and untimely, that they roused the jealous fears of the nobles of the land. Hence the King, who, although tenderly loved by the mass of the nation, and more especially by the higher classes, soon began to lose the respect and esteem of his most powerful supporters.

Had the nobles only seen in these amours the mere indulging of a sensual passion, they would

not have been so desirous of constituting themselves the moral instructors of their sovereign ; but, unfortunately, many political interests were involved in this fatal passion, which called for their serious attention. Ruben, the Jew, and a rabbi, enjoyed an unlimited influence over the mind of the fair Jewess, his niece. He soon perceived that the infatuation of the King might be made subservient to his own private views, and he, therefore, not only looked with a lenient eye on the errors of Rachel, but even found means to sanction them by bringing forward many subtle arguments, and adducing examples from the holy writings in support of his views. According to him the results sanctioned the means, and he taught Rachel that it was meritorious in her to encourage the love of the Christian King, and thereby to gain an ascendancy over his heart, if by so doing any good could accrue to her people : and this, indeed, it could not be doubted would be the happy consequence if she followed scrupulously his instructions.

The Jews, at that period, were as much the objects of hatred and scorn as they have been in later times, when the progress of civilization ought to have produced a very different conduct. They were then marked by the same love of gain — by the same character of duplicity and sordid views ; they were despised, and barely allowed to carry on their speculations provided they did not pretend

to interfere in any subject of public or momentous interest ; they were restricted in certain privileges enjoyed by the Christians, and were altogether considered as an inferior cast in the state. But, notwithstanding these oppressions, their numbers had been gradually increasing as well as their wealth, which made them, at length, assume an importance in the nation little satisfactory to the Christians. This importance was necessarily heightened by the influence which their Rachel held over the King, and which the shrewd and plotting Ruben took care to improve by his wily instructions. Hence the manifest discontent which reigned amongst the Christian nobles—they could not patiently endure that a degraded class of people should exult over them, much less when their arrogance overstepped all the bounds of moderation. Nor could they tamely brook the partial decrees which were wrung from the King in favour of the Jews, to the prejudice of the Christians, by the pernicious power of his mistress.

Such a state of things roused the indignation of the proud Castilians. For some time they had beheld in patient sorrow the ignoble servitude to which their sovereign, and even their country were reduced. But the evil growing worse, and Alphonso not being desirous of receiving their friendly advice, the nobles determined to provide a remedy against the calamity that weighed upon

the nation, and hence originated the clandestine meeting to which Hernan Garcia was invited by Lara.

In the silence of night, several leaguered nobles began to repair to the mansion of Alvar Fañez, the place of meeting. All the most illustrious and influential grandees of the land were now assembled, for all, more or less, were insulted and injured by the importance which the Jews were arrogating to themselves; and all, more or less, felt bitterly ashamed at the enslaved state to which their King was reduced. Alvar Fañez, after a short pause, thus addressed his fellow nobles:—"Brave and good Castilians, to persuade the ears of the King to listen to the advice of prudence, is a fruitless task; to open his eyes, fascinated as they are by the fatal charms of the syren, to the miseries and degradation of the land, is equally impossible. We must now try a different remedy for the growing evil. We have indeed powerful motives to rise in arms, and teach Alphonso that he is the King of a warlike, of a free people—not a debased race of slaves. For causes far more slight, the rulers of these realms have been obliged to answer by strength of argument or force of arms, the complaints of the aggrieved nobles. Such a course might be still pursued in the present instance, but the heroic qualities, the courage, generosity, and goodness of heart which

have distinguished the early and glorious part of Alphonso's reign, give him a just title to our gratitude, and a right to be treated with more leniency when he sins."

"The noble Alvar Fañez," said Lara, "speaks most prudently; the person of the King must be respected, whilst we deal the direst retribution on the wretches that cause our just indignation. My first proposition is, that the accursed Jewess die!"

"Agreed, agreed!" eagerly exclaimed several voices.

"Stay," interposed Hernan Garcia, "stay; we are noble Castilians, not unworthy dastards: let us not defile our steels with the blood of a woman, however guilty that woman may be. The act is repugnant, odious to my feelings; and my sword at least shall never be bathed but in the blood of miscreant Moors, or those enemies of my country who are able to defend themselves."

"Hear the punctilious noble," cried Lara, with a bitter banter. "Oh! Hernan Garcia, what strange fatality wills it that you, one of the bravest of Castilian knights, should often mar a good point through an excess of delicacy! The evils which weigh upon us, though worked by a woman, are not the less galling and unbearable; why, therefore, should any ceremonious obstacle be raised in the way of retribution? Why should a woman, because nature has endowed her with

softness and charms, have a privilege to do evil? I confess, my noble companions, that such nice distinctions are to me incomprehensible. I know that my country is suffering, my religion insulted, my King degraded, that I am bound in duty to exert myself to oppose such fatal wrongs, and that a Jewess slave is, after all, no such princely object; that we ought to pause ere we inflict the punishment she deserves."

"And far be it from me to withhold thy arm, O Lara," cried Hernan Garcia, "when I am conscious that thou art discharging a duty; but methinks our views may be answered without resorting to such fearful extremes. Spare the life of the woman, and let her and the principal accomplices be banished for ever from these realms."

"That timid measure," continued Lara, "would only render our case more wretched; good policy might tell you, Hernan Garcia, that when you strike an enemy whom you fear, you ought to strike him to the death, not merely satisfy yourself with inflicting a wound from which he may recover, and then live to cause your ruin in reward for your clemency. And such would be the case with the Jewess Rachel; that woman's fatal charms and allurements are more redoubtable to the Castilians than a host of mail-clad warriors. As long as she lives, however distant from Toledo, she will always sigh for the power and pleasures she has lost;

and will use all endeavours to accomplish her restoration, The King will fall again into the perfidious snare, and we shall then be compelled to fly for redress to open rebellion ; for nothing short of fear of losing the crown will at that period awake the dormant King to a sense of his duties. No, Castilians, the sacrifice of Rachel, however distressing to your generous feelings, is indispensable ; it must be resolved — she must die !” — “ Yes, she must die !” cried the nobles, almost unanimously.

The alternative was repugnant to many of the knights, but there was such strong reason in what Lara urged, that those who did not openly testify their approbation of the measure remained passive, and would not venture to oppose it. Of these nobles, Hernan Garcia was the principal. To spill the blood of the fair Jewess appeared to him a merciless, an unmanly act ; still, to hope for the redress of their grievances, as long as she lived, was not to be expected. He stifled, therefore, the rising feelings of pity, and resolved to adopt a middle course ; he would not lend his aid in the approaching tragedy, but he would not prevent the other actors from performing their parts.

“ That first sacrifice,” said Alver Fañez, “ being decided upon, another point must occupy our attention. Ye are aware, my noble friends, of the dangerous posture which those accursed Jews are daily assuming ; their wealth renders them

haughty ; their numbers strong, and yet are they of no use to the public good, for in all our wars with the infidel, they seem more ready to rejoice in our defeat than in our triumph : they hate us, if possible, more than we do their accursed race. Now, see the folly of allowing a powerful body of secret enemies to be acquiring strength every day in the very bosom of the land !”

“ I see the mischief clearly,” said Lara, “ and am equally anxious with you to afford a speedy remedy.”

“ Yes, a speedy remedy alone can be of avail,” resumed Fañez, in a very sedate tone of voice, “ therefore let a general massacre of the Jews be decreed.”

This proposal excited much agitation in the assembly, and the opinions were almost equally divided. The horror of the measure shocked many, whilst the hatred to the Jews induced others to overlook its atrocity. A scene of debate and confusion ensued, but the votes in favour of more benevolent measures at length prevailed. Hernan Garcia, with the humanity which was peculiar to his disposition, made his companions sensible of the horror of the deed, and of the shame that would stain the memory of the Castilian nobles, when it was known abroad that, because their King was enamoured of a Jewish girl, they had exterminated thousands of her people. More conciliatory

measures were then proposed, and adopted. It was resolved, that only the principal delinquents should suffer death ; and accordingly, Ruben, the uncle of the Jewess, who was far the most dangerous, by his pernicious counsels, was a victim whose fate was decreed with unanimous approbation. Two or three other influential Jews were also devoted to destruction. Many others, it was determined, should be banished to Toledo ; and every thing being finally settled the meeting broke up, resolved to carry their plans into execution on the first opportunity.

The Castilian nobles separated, all firmly bent on the speculation that engrossed their minds, but no one was more desirous for the accomplishment of the intended sacrifice than Lara. That cavalier had, indeed, more reason than the rest of his companions to be dissatisfied at the conduct of the King, and eager to devise means of redress. Lara suffered most deeply from the fatal amours that enslaved the mind of his sovereign, who was indebted to Lara for services which a monarch can never forget, without becoming an object of hate and scorn. It was Lara who, at the utmost peril of his life, had saved Alphonso, when an infant, from the ambition and cruelty of Ferdinand, king of Leon, when that sovereign, availing himself of his unprotected state, made an attempt to usurp the sceptre of Castile. Lara had been most devo-

ted to the Infant King, as Alphonso was called, and on one occasion had been obliged to envelop him in his cloak and fly, closely pursued by the enemy, to a place of safety ; and he had expended his treasure and lost many of his relatives and retainers in defending the rights of Alphonso. All these services had endeared him to the young King, and given him a powerful influence over his mind ; this influence was now lost on account of the engrossing power which the Jewess exercised, and the old nobleman felt keenly this diminution of his authority, no less than the unworthy motives that had produced it.

On the morning following the night of the meeting, the King went as usual to enjoy the company of his beloved mistress. Dazzling with ornament and reclining on a luxuriant couch, the beautiful girl awaited the visit of her royal lover. If any thing could excuse the infatuation of Alphonso, it was the surpassing loveliness of its object. A face of singular beauty was rendered still more enchanting by the symmetry of her fine figure, the delicate and chiselled roundness of all her limbs. Her eyes were of a dazzling brilliancy, the fire of which seemed to be fed and maintained under the fostering care of long silken lashes, while the beauty and blackness of her eyebrows were rendered doubly powerful by the contrast of a complexion of snowy whiteness. The olive hue

of her race was not discernible in Rachel, and it was this circumstance that had procured for her the title of the *fair Jewess*.

Alphonso found his beloved in a pensive mood — a heavy sadness was stamped on her brow, and her beauteous lip, upon his approach, curled with a melancholy smile. She returned the soft endearments of her lover with her wonted tenderness ; but, alas ! in the most vivid tokens of happiness and delight, there was a chord that vibrated mournfully to Alphonso's heart. The sighs of Rachel were too frequent, nor were they of that nature which betokens content and bliss. No ; they were the harbingers of fateful presentiment — of painful uneasiness.

Alphonso tenderly took the hand of his Rachel, and pressing it endearingly between his own, looked with eager fondness on her tearful eyes. “ Rachel ! — my own Rachel ! — my soul's idol ! — why do I find those bright eyes dimmed with the tears of sorrow ? — Why do those pallid tints usurp the cherished spot where roses bloomed in pride and freshness ? — Has any one dared to offend thee ? — speak — speak, Rachel ; ” he added with an angry tone — “ give me the name of the traitor, and, by heaven, he shall fearfully rue his temerity.”

“ No, my dear Lord and King,” answered Rachel, in a gentle and sweet voice ; “ no one has

done me injury — calm those transports of wrath.” “Nay, Rachel,” gravely resumed the King, “deceive me not — thy soft nature may pardon, but my judgment tells me that something is amiss. I full well know that some of my nobles contemn thee — they dare not give utterance to their venom, but yet they hate thee — the wretches cannot appreciate thy excellence — they are insensible to thy charms. Fools and wittols, they cannot see that so beautiful a shrine contains a soul still more beautiful and lovely. But let those arrogant Castilians confine their rancorous feelings to the inmost depths of their bosoms — let them not give outward evidence of the spiteful sentiments by which they are inspired. Let them be wary of their words and actions, or, by my faith, if Alphonso’s wrath be once excited, it will not be gentle in its fall!”

Alphonso delivered these expressions with that impetuosity which was natural to his character. The fair Jewess was alarmed at the gathering storm on his brow, and speedily essayed to quell it.

“Thy apprehensions are perhaps unfounded,” said Rachel mildly; “thy excessive fondness and solicitude for me, renders thee so susceptible to the least appearance of evil. I do not blame the nobles of Castile for their jealousy — it is natural; those who had so much influence in the councils of the King, are galled that their power should have been transferred to a faithful and loving woman; their

pride is hurt, yet I do not conceive them capable of doing aught to my injury. No, the cause of the sadness which oppresses me now springs from a very different source."

"Let me know it — Oh! do not augment the agony of suspense," cried the enanoured Alphonso; "each moment that thou sufferest, dear, is a century of misery to me."

"I am ashamed to own my weakness," said Rachel with some hesitation, whilst a playful smile wreathed her lovely features. "It is in sooth a womanish apprehension, and I ought not to give it utterance."

"Thou must, Rachel," answered the King; "thou must not defraud Alphonso of one of thy thoughts, be they happy or sad; this is a right I claim, and which thou, my sweet, canst not deny. Now, unfold that secret."

"Can you believe it, my dear lord?" said Rachel half ashamed, and endeavouring to conceal in a smile the fearful bodings of her heart. "Can you believe that a dream, an airy foolish dream, is the sole motive of the emotion you now see on my countenance? — Yes, a dream, nothing but a dream."

"I for one," said the King, laughing, "am most sceptical on the subject of such unsubstantial visitors. I never either believe their promises, or fear their threats, but treat both one and the other

with equal indifference. But what does thy dream portend, my lovely Rachel?"

"Most fearful events! a doom that thrills me with horror."

"To you, love?"

"Yes, to me and to my uncle."

"Indeed; well, I can assure thee that thy dream is in very truth an impostor, which fills thy bosom with vain fears, that will soon be dissipated by the sport that is to occupy the day."

"What sport, my honoured King?" inquired Rachel with some emotion.

"The chase," answered Alphonso.

At the announcement of this single word a dreadful emotion was discernible in the Jewess; she uttered a faint scream, the colour completely forsook her cheek, and her eyes beamed with a wild look of terror and dismay. She seemed ready to sink exhausted and lifeless. The King in alarm supported her in his arms, and with tender fondness endeavoured to calm her agitation.

"What ails thee, love?" he said, in a voice broken by fear and affection. "What strange emotion is this? Speak, oh speak, if thou do not wish to see me lose my reason!"

"Oh, Alphonso!" muttered the Jewess, in a faint tone and manner, "forgive my weakness; but the announcement was so unexpected and fearful ——"

“ The announcement, love ? You bewilder my imagination ; what fearful announcement is this ? ”

“ The chase ! the chase ! ” replied Rachel, with redoubled emotion.

“ The chase, and how can that sport interfere with thy happiness and safety ? ”

“ Oh, it is dreadfully connected with my dream ! ”

“ The dream again ! ’Tis strange ! Speak, my dearest Rachel ; explain the purport of that horrid dream, which has produced such melancholy results upon thy mind.”

“ Methought,” said the Jewess, after a pause, in which she endeavoured to regain some composure, “ methought you had invited all the principal nobles to a grand chase ; the preparations were magnificent, and all Toledo rung with the joy of the animating pastime. By your desire, I accompanied you, and the cavalcade left the city with hearts bounding with delight and hope. But, alas ! mine was no partaker in the general satisfaction ! An undefinable presentiment of evil was so firmly rooted there, that neither thy soothing endearments, nor the excitement of the pursuit, could divert my thoughts from their mournful tendency. The sport continued, however, with much spirit, several animals were speared, and the lively strains of the bugles, and the joyous cries of the nobles and their attendants, contributed to

throw a more stirring interest into the scene. But my sadness, instead of abating, seemed only to increase, at the sight of every new trophy of the chase. At last, a prodigious boar, with horrid tusk and flaming eyes, was startled from his repose. The Castilian nobles raised a shout of joy, and went boldly to engage the terrific monster. The boar grinned fearfully against them, and savagely prepared for the conflict. But his growl of wrath was soon converted into a cry of lamentation — a dozen pointed weapons were darted against him; enraged, he roused himself to fury, and shook the arrows from his side, till, smarting with the pain, he darted against his foes; but was met by a forest of spears, under which he perished. Then, oh, Alphonso! then, to my utter dismay and horror, I saw the fallen and bleeding animal suddenly transformed into the resemblance of Ruben — of my own uncle! I screamed in terror, and, starting fearfully, awoke.”

Alphonso smiled at the recital of so strange a dream, and said, “But you mentioned that your own doom was connected with the chase; how can this be?”

“Alas!” resumed Rachel, still agitated, “my fearful vision did not end there: I again fell asleep, and again the ominous vision of the chase was presented to my view. A timid doe, of fair colour, but sprinkled with spots, came flying in

wild terror down the valley, fiercely pursued, by several huntsmen; at length she was overtaken, and surrounded; she cast a mournful and appalling look towards her enemies, then uttered a most painful cry, and sunk to the ground pierced with the barbarous wounds. This was the most frightful portion of my dream, the poor bleeding doe gradually assumed my image. In proportion that this transformation was wrought, most acute pains oppressed me, as if I felt the wounds with which the dying creature was covered. Then I heard an awful voice speaking in my affrighted ear — *Rachel! Rachel! Beware the chase, for it is the chase that will cause thy doom!*”

Alphonso again strove to dispel the ominous fears of the trembling girl. He pressed her fondly to his breast, as he softly said, “Rachel, what canst thou fear whilst shielded by my arm; who would dare to move against thee whilst Alphonso draws breath? Trust to my love, my power; follow me to the chase to-day, and thou wilt see how puerile and groundless are thy apprehensions.”

“Oh no! no, Alphonso,” interposed Rachel, with greater emotion, “indulge me in this weakness; do not oblige me to be present at the fatal scene. I know the folly of my dread, yet the ominous warning still rings in my ear; I would not join the chase.”

“ Well, well,” said the King, smiling, “ I will not press you to any thing that does not meet with your concurrence. Since you apprehend danger from the chase, remain in the palace till my return ; nay, to show you how solicitous I am to gratify you even in a foolish chimera, I will use all my efforts to break the power of the prediction. Instead of a grand excursion with mighty preparations, I shall only set out with three or four attendants ; and instead of noisy bugles, and clamour, and splendour, I shall leave Toledo almost incognito, so that my short absence will be totally unknown to the nobles of my court.”

With these assurances he succeeded in calming the agitation of his beloved mistress. A sweet smile now played on her lip, and she looked lovingly on Alphonso, in gratitude for his tender solicitude. As the day was far advanced he then retired to give orders for his private departure for the chase. He chose for his companions on the occasion only four attendants, and those of subordinate station. The party was composed of a single knight, Don Rodrigo Roelas, the other three were inferior persons. Having made these arrangements, the King returned to receive the parting embrace of Rachel, as it was his custom upon the shortest absence.

The looks of the devoted Jewess again assumed a gloomy cast, a profound sigh escaped her labour-

ing bosom, she felt a presentiment of evil, which she strived to smother in order not to distress her anxious lover.

“Farewell, my dearest Rachel,” said he tenderly, as he bestowed the softest kiss on her snowy forehead : “Farewell ! It shall not be long ere I return to thy fond embrace.”

He disengaged himself from her arms, and was slowly retreating from her presence, when she fixed a mournful glance upon him, and then, with a sudden impulse, she flew to him, and, falling on his bosom, gave vent to a flood of tears.

This unusual emotion alarmed the King. He remained for some time in deep reverie, then, in an affectionate tone, said—

“Rachel, if you wish it, I will not quit thy side?”

“Oh no, go to the chase,” she answered eagerly, “for I shall not regain my peace and tranquillity until it is over. Only promise me ; promise me in the name of our fondest loves, not to tarry in the sport beyond four in the afternoon.”

“Yes, dearest,” said Alphonso, “thy wishes shall be obeyed, therefore cheer up, and pass the time pleasantly during my absence. Look to thy blooming bowers, and do not neglect thy lute, that sweet instrument which, in unison with thy still sweeter voice, has afforded to Alphonso some

of the most enraptured moments of his life. Adieu, my best beloved, adieu, and be of good heart."

As he said this he withdrew from the apartment ; but no sooner was he gone than a heavy cloud seemed to have fallen over the eyes of the sorrowing Jewess. Unable to restrain her anxiety as she heard the hoof of the prancing horses on the pavement, she gently stole a look from her casement, and saw the King and his four attendants proceeding to the sport. She kept her fond gaze steadily fixed upon him, and when distance at length closed him from her sight her melancholy eyes were suffused with tears ; in a sad agitated tone she sighed—

“ Alas ! this is an ominous parting.”

The unfortunate girl laboured under strong mental agony ; the idea of some impending calamity had obtained such fearful ascendancy over her, that no sooner did she find herself alone, than a feeling of desolation, of hopelessness, settled in her heart. She called Sarah, her Jewish attendant, to her side, for she appeared afraid to remain alone. She then wandered into the garden, and, led by a sort of melancholy instinct, pursued those paths which she had often trod in the company of him she so passionately loved. But nothing could dispel the absorbing gloom which clouded her mind. Every object to which she fled for

relief, served only to increase her boding melancholy. She found food for sorrow in the contemplation of those trees whose shadow had often shaded their loving rambles from intrusion; and the sweet carols of those birds whose gentle strains had served to heighten their dreary rapture, now conveyed to her ear only melancholy notes predictive of misfortune.

Then, following the instruction of her dear lord, she repaired to her chamber, and, taking up her lute, endeavoured to disperse the dark images that pressed upon her imagination. But a fatal charm led her into a strain of sorrow which was in accordance with her present state of mind, and in a plaintive tone she sang the following lay: —

Whence rise these fears that fill my breast?

This doubt that mars my dream of love?

I thought not while supremely blest,

Spain's loveliest, proudest dames above,

That fear could thus around me cling —

That doubt could thus my bosom wring.

Love hovers o'er me with the smile

Which promises unchanging gladness;

But, listening to his charms the while,

My soul is bowed with secret sadness.

I should be glad — nor weep, nor sigh,

With love so blest so bright as mine;

But visions dark and drear pass by,

And fairer prospects cease to shine.

The last strain of the lute had scarcely ceased its vibration, and the mournful Rachel was preparing to sing another verse, when the instrument fell from her hands, and she startled up in alarm. "Oh, my Sarah!" she anxiously cried, "did you not hear a noise?—hark! it approaches—it swells on the wind. Merciful heavens! what do these fearful sounds portend?"

"Hush! sweet lady," said her attendant. "I hear nothing to excite alarm and dread; 'tis true some noise is heard in the distance, but there is nothing strange in the circumstance. A quarrel—a family feud of two powerful families, or a party of drunken handicraftsmen, are daily affording occasion for the like noises and clamours. Let us not trouble ourselves about the matter, satisfied that we are out of the reach of such broils, and secure from the danger that accompanies them."

"My heart misgives me, terribly," exclaimed Rachel, still more agitated. "I feel a deadly pressure on my bosom; in vain you strive to banish my fears; they are more powerful than the good offices of thy affection. Ah! dost thou hear now?—the tumult grows apace!—what a deafening clamour!—some disorderly crowd advances. I hear terrible imprecations. Oh! how fearfully sound their confused and hurried tramps. Oh, my Sarah—whither shall we fly?—hide me from them!"

“Nay, nay, lady,” said Sarah, in a chiding voice, “this alarm is misplaced and foolish; what connection can there be between you and a riotous crew?”

“I know not; but my heart tells me that my doom is at hand. Hark! how awfully the commotion increases — the terrible sound already fills the palace — they come — hear them! they come! They are already at the gates; the guards cannot restrain them. What ferocious shouts of exultation! — helpless Rachel! They ascend — Mercy! Oh, my Alphonso, where art thou? — protect me! — Mercy! — Oh! heavens, mercy!”

Rachel, exhausted, sunk upon her seat at that moment of terror, whilst the affrighted girl was in her agony calling on her lover. Alphonso pursued the sport of the chase with great spirit and delight. It was a favourite pastime of the King, and as he had not for some time allowed himself its enjoyment, he now found a relish in the pursuit.

“Holla, my good Rodrigo!” cried the King to that knight. “What hast thou found to produce such a clamour? — What is it? some hidden treasure which belonged to a Moor dead this century or so? — What is it?”

“A treasure, forsooth!” replied Roelas; “and a good-sized one! Santiago, help me! I never saw such a heap of flesh. Now, Sir King, be on

your guard, for the creature seems determined to afford us no easy victory."

He had scarcely said this when the Knight came, retreating in an attitude of defence. Soon after a most prodigious boar was seen issuing from the covert.

"There, my liege," quoth Roelas, "was there ever such a monster discovered before in all Spain? Why, the creature is capable of consuming one half of your realms. And now to try if my spear be as true to me as hitherto."

"Hold, Don Rodrigo," cried the King, with a burst of laughter, "do not hurt the poor Jew."

"The Jew! Heaven defend us," exclaimed the Knight, with a significant smile, "surely we are not to be pursued by them even out of the court at Toledo. I should indeed be a Jew if I were to spare the boar, but of that there is no danger; I am a true Christian, and I mean to show my orthodoxy by making a plentiful repast to-morrow on yonder grave personage of the protruding tusks."

Roelas then gallantly attacked the brute. He inflicted two or three wounds with wonderful precision and skill. The King continuing in his merry humour, exclaimed—

"Now be wary what you do, Sir Knight, for mayhap that grim boar may be transformed into the image of the Rabbi Ruben."

“Grammercy, my liege, for the intelligence,” answered Roelas, in the same significative strain; “that in sooth is a powerful inducement to use my best exertions in the combat.”

The animal soon perished under the repeated blows of the King and his attendants : after which Roelas, a most enthusiastic and indefatigable huntsman, put spurs to his steed, and hied away in pursuit of new game. Not a quarter of an hour had elapsed when his clamorous voice was heard again in the distance.

“Heaven bless Don Rodrigo,” quoth the King; “well, commend me to that cavalier for a right good huntsman. Come, pull up, and let us see what fresh prize has the gallant Roelas started.”

They were not long in rejoining the Knight, whom they perceived closely pursuing a white doe, that seemed on the point of sinking through exhaustion. A few seconds more and the poor animal relinquished all struggles for safety, and lay down in terror and despair. Roelas had prepared his weapon : his victim at his approach uttered a painful, piercing cry — the note of agony thrilled to Alphonso’s heart. He felt a sudden pang he could not understand ; and at the sight of the bleeding doe his soul was powerfully moved, and he turned away with a feeling of pain, horror, and alarm. A fearful image crossed his mind, a groan escaped

him, a sudden paleness overspread his countenance, and in an agitated tone he cried aloud —

“Castilian, hasten to Toledo: follow me. Oh! heavens, by the position of the sun it must be past the hour! Let me not think! such an idea brings something worse than death with it.”

Alphonso, in evident agitation, applied spurs to his swift charger, and bent his course to Toledo in a precipitous and desperate manner. His horse swept along the plain with the rapidity of a flashing meteor; but the violent beating of the King's heart was more hurried and impetuous than the bounds of the flying steed. Alphonso soon left his companions far behind, and, like some wild spirit of terror, some unearthly horseman, he entered Toledo with breathless haste, still impelling the faithful charger, whose tramp along the streets now resounded with fearful clamour.

Throbbing with anxiety and pain, panting, breathless, defiled with dust, and his charger covered with foam, Alphonso at length arrived at the Zocodover, the principal square of Toledo, and came in view of his palace. His dreadful apprehensions were confirmed. With freezing horror he perceived a tumultuous crowd in front of the palace; their clamours deafened the air; the King observed that they carried a trophy, with shouts of exultation: it was the bleeding head of Ruben,

affixed to a long spear, which the motley throng were parading about in derision and barbaric joy!

Alphonso uttered a cry of horror at the sight, and, springing headlong from his horse, he ran, with the wildness of desperation, to the palace, burst through the confused mob with overwhelming impetus, reached the royal mansion, traversed the hall, flew up the steps, and, gaining the apartment of Rachel, arrived just in time to receive the dying words of his beloved and murdered mistress.

What a sickening scene offered itself to the contemplation of the bewildered Alphonso: his Rachel, his fondly adored Rachel, lay, pierced with a gaping wound, and weltering in her blood. The look of wild terror still shot from her eye, which was, alas! about to close for ever. The shadows of death were already hovering over the pale, but yet lovely countenance of the victim. Alphonso uttered a piercing cry of horror: "Rachel, my well beloved, my murdered life! Rachel! Look on me, love! Oh, fix upon the despairing Alphonso the last sad glances of thy fleeting soul!"

He precipitated himself on the almost lifeless body of his beloved, and, pressing the yielding form tenderly to his bosom, gave vent to a paroxysm of grief and despair. Rachel was conscious of the pressure of love; after the appalling scene

of horror and hatred that she had experienced, these tokens of affection came upon her darkened soul like the healing breath of ministering angels. She fixed her dying eyes languidly, but tenderly, on her afflicted lover, and, in a low, fainting voice, muttered, "Oh, my Alphonso ! thou art come — too late — too late ! But, Heaven bless thy kind — thy generous soul. I die ! the grasp of death is fast upon my heart ! Yes, 'tis some alleviation of my horrid doom to breathe my last in thy arms ! Farewell, my Alphonso !"

She uttered a faint moan, and was no more ! The King, for a moment, gazed in wild stupor on the cold burthen he held in his embrace. The weight and suddenness of his calamity plunged him in a state of painful delusion — of unnatural doubt. He saw his adored Rachel lifeless in his arms, yet he could not give credence to so appalling a certainty. But, gradually, the first influence of chilled amazement subsided, and more fearful feelings assumed its place. An expression of frenzied anger, blended with intense grief, now animated those features which had been lately fixed in apathetic gloom. He let the corpse fall from his grasp, and, fiercely snatching his weapon —

"Where, where is the murderer ?" he cried, in a frantic voice, "the foul, remorseless fiend that hath done this ?"

It was then that he first perceived several of his nobles in the apartment. He fixed his fierce eyes upon them.

“Base assassins ! Cowardly men ! Unworthy knights ! this is well ! Contemplate your hellish work, but hope not to evade my revenge. No, by heaven ! Castile shall rue for the sanguinary deed. Oh that my arm may have its wonted strength, to strike you down, traitors ! And then, joyfully, I will receive my death from your rebel hands, and gladly join the spirit of my murdered Rachel !”

“Strike, then !” said Manrique de Lara calmly : “Strike, oh King ! ’tis the bosom of old Lara, of the most ancient and faithful of thy adherents, that is now bared to thy sword. If the death of him who saved thy life and kingdom can assuage thy thirst of revenge, scruple not to strike. I can now die content. Let the sacrifice be added to the list of services that Lara has done his King and country. Strike ! For that King is now rescued from ignoble bondage, and that country freed from degradation !”

The King had advanced towards Lara with a furious intention ; but the noble composure and fearless magnanimity of the venerable Knight arrested the progress of his arm ; the sword fell from its firm grasp, and Alphonso contemplated the true Castilian in a tumultuous conflict of emotions.

Hernan Garcia availed himself of this contest between revenge and gratitude to interpose.

“Oh ! Alphonso,” he said, “the sacrifice has been horrible, but just ; my heart bled when my brother nobles convinced my reason of the distressing necessity. Oh ! noble King, think what you have been, and what you are ; those Moors who trembled at the announcement of thy name, now hear that name pronounced with scorn. Nay, their insults to Castile are daily growing more difficult to endure. This the land owes to the infatuation of its ruler. The fascination of the Jewess was strong, fearfully strong, so to enslave the heart of Alphonso. Nor do we reprove your grief, for it is natural, but yet let not that grief, nor a desire of revenge, urge you to do aught in detriment of Castile. The people are roused, and remember it is easier to kindle a flame than to stay its destructive course.”

The words of the noble Hernan Garcia went to the King’s heart ; he paused, and, sheathing his weapon, said in a melancholly tone — “ ’Tis well ! rebellion triumphs in Castile. Oh ! Rachel, could not thy unoffending charms disarm their cruel hearts ? ”

“ My liege,” said Lara, “yon unfortunate girl, previously condemned to death, died by the hand of a slave, for you could not suppose that the hands of noble Castilians would be stained with

the blood of a woman. The sacrifice is consummated, and now, instead of indulging unavailing sorrow, summon thy heroic resolution and lead thy faithful subjects against the Moor."

The increasing shouts of the multitude convinced the King of their hatred to the Jews, and of his own imprudence. He therefore, whilst his heart was breaking, resolved to sink the regrets of the lover in the stern duties of a King.

"Castilians," he said, in a broken tone of voice, "you know not how profound, how rankling is the wound you have inflicted on the heart of Alphonso; but I will not be unmindful of the charge imposed upon me by my station."

The King ordered the funeral rites of the fair Jewess to be performed, and he himself attended them, evincing the most lively sorrow. He then freely pardoned his nobles for their dreadful patriotism, and seemed in a measure reconciled to his afflicted state; but, alas! it was long, very long, before Alphonso of Castile found his mind free from the distressing remembrance of his tenderly beloved and unfortunate Rachel.

The Spanish Crusade.

“ And there was mounting in hot haste the steed ;
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war.”

LORD BYRON.



ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE SPANISH CRUSADE.

The Spanish Crusade.

THE loss of the great battle of Alarcos had thrown the Christian powers of Spain into great alarm. Many years had elapsed since that fatal event, and yet the King of Castile seemed not to have recovered from the shock which he had sustained. Thousands of his bravest Castilians, a host of gallant knights, amongst which was Martinez, the master of Calatrava, were left dead on the field of strife. Baggage, treasure, every thing had been lost in that disastrous day; and Alphonso, the Noble, returned to his court at Toledo, dispirited, confounded, and almost in despair.

But his magnanimous soul could not long remain in this desponding state. To the feelings of sorrow and shame, rapidly succeeded those of resentment, and a powerful emulation to retrieve the lost glories of Castile. This thought occupied him through the day, and was the constant subject of his dreams at night. He pondered maturely in his mind the means of executing his mighty projects. His fervid spirit was wrought up to a degree of enthusiasm, which he soon infused into the hearts of his best knights; but, alas! in the impoverished

state of his coffers, and his deficiency with regard to soldiers, it could not be expected that his warlike speculation should be brought to a successful issue by his solitary exertions. As he was profoundly meditating on the subject, a monk craved admission to his presence, declaring that he had matters of high importance to communicate. His request was granted, and Father Anselmo, a venerable old man, well known for the virtues and austerities of his life, stood before the King. "The moment is arrived, oh! King of Castile," he said in a solemn voice, "to achieve that which hath never yet been done by human power. The moment is arrived to abase the towering pride of the infidels, and bid the good Christians rejoice. I speak from the holy spirit of revelation; yes, it has been imparted to me, an unworthy sinner, that a battle more glorious than has ever been achieved, shall accompany the arms of Alphonso of Castile—a battle which will transmit his name to the remotest posterity, and excite in every succeeding generation deep sentiments of gratitude and admiration. Rise up, oh noble King; summon that courage for which thou wert ever noted, save, alas! in those shameful years when enslaved by the baneful charms of the Jewess. Rise up, for the day of triumph is at hand, and the children of Spain shall wash away the stains which their prowess suffered on the fatal day of Alarcos."

Such words were highly gratifying to the King, yet he did not perceive the certainty of success, situated as he was. "Good father," said Alphonso, "it is not courage that is wanting in Castile. Bring me men; bring me the means to support them, and let all the powers of the Moslem come against me, I fear it not."

"Listen, 'my son,'" resumed the monk, in a mysterious tone of voice, "this is a holy war that you are about to undertake; it is against the enemies of our religion that you engage; the conflict must be sacred to all Christian nations, and they must lend their aid to this great work. It is a Crusade similar to those which have led so many worthy champions to the Holy Land. The laurels which the Christians will gain in this war will be equal to those that they acquired in Palestine. Send, oh! Alphonso, an embassy to his Holiness, asking his sanction to the enterprize, and the grant of plenary indulgences to the pious warriors who will join our cause. Knights and squires will flock to thy standard from all parts of Christendom; the hand of God will be visible in this noble undertaking; nay, an angel will lead thy army to victory."

The ideas of the monk were readily received by the King. His ardent spirit easily conceived that the method proposed by his religious counsellor was full of promise. He had heard much of the

feats of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, and he had, on more than one occasion, felt a noble jealousy at the achievements of Richard, surnamed the Lion-hearted, of England, and the other knights who distinguished themselves in the holy wars. Alphonso the Eighth was, perhaps, the most chivalrous prince that had ever mounted the throne of Castile. From his very childhood his life had been involved in romantic adventures and peril. His ardent mind, therefore, very soon grasped eagerly, and retained tenaciously, the suggestions of the monk. Besides, even divesting the intended project of all the paraphernalia of chivalry, views of the soundest policy would counsel such a measure. Here was an opportunity to give a death blow to the power of the Moor, for the various Christian princes, however jealous amongst themselves, always, on extreme occasions, united their efforts against the common enemy. Alphonso could not carry a sufficient force into the field to compete with the multitude of soldiers which Mohammed had lately brought over from Africa. It was indispensable, therefore, to request the assistance of his brother Christians, and he was sagacious enough to perceive that so pious a pretext as a religious Crusade, would blind the most suspicious, and bury the jealousies of a rival's aggrandizement in the general interests of Christianity.

The suggestions of the monk were, accordingly, joyfully embraced by Alphonso ; and he now turned all the powers of his mind towards adopting the most efficacious measures for the successful accomplishment of the glorious plan. The King assembled his nobles, and having disclosed his views, they were not only approved but received with acclamations. He immediately despatched an embassy to Rome, at the head of which was the Bishop of Segovia, to obtain from the Pope the plenary indulgence and permission to preach the Spanish Crusade against the Mahomedans. At the same time he sent the Archbishop of Toledo to France, to solicit the aid of the King and his knights. Both these embassies were attended with success ; and all Spain rung with the preparations for the great enterprise. The King assembled the Cortes in the capital of his dominions, and they sat it debate without intermission, to concert the most efficient measures for the commencement of the Crusade. Toledo was likewise selected to be the place of general meeting, as well as the head-quarters of the Christian champions.

In a short time that city presented a most animated and magnificent spectacle. The number of knights and squires and retainers flocking from all parts was so vast that Toledo could not contain the mighty crowd, and a new city arose in the

neighbouring plains, composed of a thousand martial tents and picturesque booths. It was, indeed, a splendid sight to view so many glittering arms and gay pennons of every variety of form and colour glaring in the sun and streaming on the wind. On one side were seen a group of doughty soldiers freely indulging in a carousal ; on the other a more industrious party were busily engaged in polishing their arms or tending the gallant steeds. Here a warrior was gently reposing under the spreading branches of a tree, dreaming of valorous achievements and glorious triumph ; there another was in close converse with his page, and by the smile that often relaxed his iron features, it was apparent that the message from his lady fair was of a pleasing nature. Again, on a gentle eminence, or an empty cask, was seen a sturdy monk, with stentorian lungs, animating the Crusaders to fight courageously and promising eternal rewards to those who fell in the holy cause ; a little further the soft voice of the minstrel was heard singing of love and war, and making promises, not of celestial crowns, but of those which ladies are wont to give to successful champions.

Now so many promises could not but produce a singular effect upon the assembled multitude, and, accordingly, those who were neither asleep nor drinking, nor otherwise engaged, appeared greatly edified by the preaching of the monk and the songs

of the minstrel. But the extemporary eloquence of the apostles of the Crusade was not always productive of only good effects. The zeal which animated them against the enemies of Christianity was so thoroughly infused into the hearts of the pious listeners, that on several occasions scenes of much confusion and serious mischief ensued. The number of Jews in Toledo was very great, and it was a subject of profound consideration amongst many of the more fervid Crusaders, whether it would not be meritorious, as well as prudent, to commence operations upon the Jews. This was, indeed, a most admirable expedient to keep them in good mettle until the important engagement arrived. It would serve as a prelude to more terrific battles. Besides, the disbelieving race were accounted rich, and this, naturally enough, was an additional inducement to excite the zeal of the valiant enthusiasts.

One morning, while the King was sitting in council, he was startled by an overpowering and tumultuous clamour.

“By Santiago,” he cried in wrath, “shall we be continually disturbed by the riotous behaviour of those dogs calling themselves Christians? Never was the imperial city of Toledo a witness to the scenes of disorder and debauchery of every description, that mark the sojourn of the Crusaders in its precincts and neighbourhood; what with

revelling and singing, and quarrelling and preaching, the whole camp bears more the aspect of an assemblage of demons than of Christian soldiers. What new disturbance is this, Don Diego de Haro?" inquired the King of a knight that was entering the hall.

"Please my liege, I presume it is a commotion produced by the preaching of Father Vazquez; the holy man, in his anathemas against infidels, has devoted so large a portion of his eloquence to the Jews, that a party of the mob are proceeding to take very summary measures on the sons of Israel."

"Alack!" muttered Alphonso, heaving a deep sigh, "rich Jews and pious Christians are doomed to be the plague of my life."

Though many years had elapsed, this circumstance brought again to the King's fancy the image of his beloved Rachel; and he could not but feel moved at so painful a recollection. After a pause of sorrow he continued with bitterness —

"And, what may my very loyal and devout subjects desire? Surely their King has no Jewish mistress now to inflame their indignation; what offence have the Jews committed? They are quiet, and, if they do not choose to turn Crusaders, I see no cause that they should be compelled to be victims."

“That character they will soon assume,” said Haro, “if a check be not put in time to the progress of the turbulent.”

“God forgive the man!” cried the King; “but that Father Vazquez does more mischief in Castile than a host of Moors. Upon my word, good sirs, I fear the friar, there is no keeping his restless spirit for a moment in repose. His clamorous tongue is continually at work to cause disturbance. Our good and holy Archbishop of Toledo has prohibited the man from preaching in the churches of his dioceses, and this is his expedient.”

“Aye,” said the Archbishop, smiling, “he revolts from the discipline of the church; and, as there are knight-adventurers, he supposes that there ought likewise to be preaching adventurers.” —“I shall put a stop to his feats, Don Diego,” added the King, addressing that knight: “do us the good service to seize the riotous father, and place him under safe custody; take a brave party with you, and disperse the crowd. Should they resist, fall upon them, for by heaven I am resolved to end these continual disturbances, and make an example of the mischievous ringleaders.”

Don Diego de Haro left the council hall to fulfil his commission. He ordered a troop of horsemen to follow him, and arrived just in time to prevent a catastrophe. The din and uproar was increasing prodigiously, and the number of the

malcontents was growing alarming. Several individuals, who from their habiliments appeared to be Jews, were seen flying in every direction, with looks of utter dismay. Many of their houses had already been broken open and pillaged, and some of the obnoxious individuals had been slain, and not a few wounded.

Don Diego soon came in sight of Father Vazquez, who, armed with a crucifix and a club, and followed by his tumultuous myrmidons, was gallantly proceeding in his operations; but the Castilian noble thought it was high time to put a stop to the singular feats that were performing for the love of God. He immediately accosted the warlike monk, and in the King's name commanded him to surrender, and his disorderly crew to disperse. An altercation ensued, and both parties were on the point of a more dangerous contest, when the sudden appearance of the King, attended by his court, and a numerous body of men at arms, cooled the ardour of the Jew-hunting crowd. The Archbishop of Toledo addressed a remonstrance to them on the folly and sin of their undertaking, and this, together with the martial display which surrounded the King, and the fierce resolution stamped on their countenances, operated wonderfully in pacifying those unruly spirits, so that they tamely suffered their leader to be seized.

These disturbances made Alphonso very anxious to set the mass of the Crusaders in motion, for the assemblage of so vast a multitude of different people could not but be considered dangerous and prejudicial to the tranquillity of his kingdom. Indeed, experience had taught the King that the sojourning of the Crusaders had always been attended with disorder. This was a natural consequence of the elements which composed such a motley concourse, and the enthusiasm and adventurous spirit by which they were actuated. Alphonso longed therefore to lead them to battle, but the absence of the King of Arragon, as well as of many valorous foreign knights from Germany and England, checked for a time his desires, and he was obliged to await their arrival.

Whilst the Christians were thus absorbed with the Crusade, the Moors on their side were no less active to provide the means of a suitable opposition. The spirit of religion inflamed them, if possible, with more frenzy than their adversaries. The victory of Alarcos had revived their hopes of recovering that ascendancy and power in Spain which they had been gradually losing. Should the present campaign prove favourable to their arms, the rule of the Crescent would be firmly fixed in the peninsula, and might in the sequel lead to a second subjugation of the whole land. These ideas flattered the pride of the Moorish

♦ leaders, and contributed to inflame their courage, while they enjoyed with their enemies an equal share of prophets and preachers, who, like the Christians of the same calling, were most liberal in promises of celestial rewards, as well as of certain triumph.

Mohammed, the Almohade caliph, was indefatigable in his exertions. He dispersed numerous emissaries through Morocco, Barbary, and even the desert, earnestly inviting all the true followers of the Koran to repair to the assistance of their brethren of Spain. Religious zeal ran high — a spirit of enthusiasm, never known since the days of the famous founder of the Mahometan empire, universally inspired the breasts of his disciples. From the remotest regions of Africa numerous parties were daily increasing the ranks of Mohammed, who, by the general consent of the Moorish leaders both of Africa and Spain, was appointed commander-in-chief of the Moslem forces.

Mohammed crossed over to Algeciras, at the head of above a hundred thousand men, leaving an army of about half that number to follow him, under the command of his Vizier. He pursued his march with the usual rapidity which distinguished the warlike movements of the Moors. In his triumphant course he took Salvatierra and other towns and castles. Finding no enemy to oppose his way, he proceeded to Seville, the capital of the

Almohade Moors, in a style more resembling a triumphant procession, than the march of soldiers who had not yet obtained the victory. But of this victory no one entertained the smallest doubt. The numbers of the combatants, and their stubborn courage, were a sure gage of success, not to mention the very decided and incontrovertible promises made to them by heaven. Some of the most fervid adherents of the Koran really expected that the Prophet would be with them at the battle, therefore they felt no alarm at the hopes of some Christians, who expected a similar favour from *Santiago*.

The arrival of Mohammed at Seville was celebrated with great rejoicings ; but he being, if possible, more devout than courageous, speedily bent his steps to the grand mosque, as was his practice upon entering a principal town of the Moorish dominions. Seville now afforded a scene very much like that of Toledo, inasmuch as regards the display of a splendid warlike assemblage, though it must be confessed that their zeal was not shown in an equally turbulent manner. The Moors of Cordova and of various other provinces, had already arrived. Soon after the remaining fifty thousand warriors came from Africa, and the Moorish army, amounting to about three hundred thousand men, was commanded to be ready for departure.

Mohammed, still more fervently to animate the already ardent spirit of his followers, and still more strongly to confirm their hopes of success, now led this prodigious mass of men to the plains of Xerez, that spot as glorious in the annals of Moorish history as it is fatal and disastrous in the pages of the Christian. As the multitude covered the wide range of territory through which the celebrated Guadalete takes its limpid course, Mohammed, from an elevated spot, harangued those of his army who stood near with a loud, and as it seemed to them, an inspired voice.

“Ye believers in the true Prophet, ye faithful followers of the Koran and defenders of the true religion, ye tread a spot rendered sacred by the blood of many Moslem martyrs, and by the glorious battle which gave the dominion of this fair country to the followers of the Crescent. Yes, it is here that five hundred years since the gallant Tarif and his brave men achieved that victory, which procured the most splendid and rapid conquest recorded in our history, or in the history of any people. But the power of the Moslem has been gradually decreasing, not because the Christians are more valiant, but because our own private dissensions and habits of luxury are daily wasting our strength and resources. The day, however, of reform and victory is arrived, the triumph obtained at Alarcos was the harbinger of

one that is to follow, of tenfold value in glory, and in the results to which it will lead. Moslem, call on the protection of heaven to aid your courage, and let the memory of Tarif and his companions accompany you to the field, and animate you to emulate their example."

Having finished this speech, Mohammed turned his face towards the east, and the hour of evening prayer being arrived, the whole vast multitude fell upon their knees and remained for some time absorbed in solemn prayer. There was something strikingly awful and touching in that prodigious mass of men armed for strife, all prostrated in humble devotion. The soft murmur of their orison came gently on the wind, conveying a tranquil and pleasing sensation to the breast of the religious chief. After this ceremony the multitude was divided into several separate squadrons, each of which remained under the immediate command of its own leaders. A body of reserve was formed out of the negro Africans, a set of men so enthusiastic and devoted, that Mohammed well knew every one of them would joyfully lay down his life before he could be persuaded to quit his post.

The forces of the Christians had, by this time, been considerably augmented. The King of Aragon had at length appeared before Toledo, accompanied by a gallant body of twenty thousand warriors. The King had given orders that the

army should be in readiness for the departure — a joyous shout rent the air as a troop of horsemen arrived at this moment, in the tented plain. They were not many in number, but their martial bearing and the renown of their names made ample amends for that deficiency. These brave knights, from their white mantles and red crosses, were soon discovered to belong to the order of Templars, whose celebrity extended over all Christendom. The Grand Master of the order came with them, and his presence in the Christian ranks was hailed with loud cries of joy.

The Christian army was now ready to commence its march, and seldom, indeed, had the world seen so grand a display of the panoplies of war. The number of high personages who were engaged in this Spanish Crusade, was very great; there were no foreign sovereigns, but in their place, not one of those of the peninsula was missing. The Kings of Arragon, and Navarre, and Portugal, had come gallantly to the aid of their brother, the King of Castile; there were besides all the minor potentates of Spain who bore the titles of Dukes or Counts. To these may be added the Grand Masters of the orders of the Templars, Santiago, and Calatrava, together with a splendid array of prelates, grandees, and knights. The archers, yeomen, and horsemen, which this crowd of Lords brought into the field, amounted to nearly a hundred and sixty thousand;

a formidable army, but yet little more than half as numerous as that of the enemy.

The van of the Crusaders was entrusted to the command of Don Diego de Haro, a powerful grandee, a brave knight, and a man perfectly skilled in the manœuvres of war. This division was composed of the foreign volunteers and several knight adventurers, with their retainers. The main body of the army was led by the King of Arragon—the Kings of Navarre and Portugal commanding the wings, whilst Alphonso placed himself at the head of fourteen thousand horse, as a body of reserve. The Archbishop of Toledo, the celebrated Don Rodrigo Ximenes, whose learning and piety were only equalled by his valour and patriotism, attended by other prelates, blessed the Crusaders, and then took his station in the centre of the army with a numerous body of retainers. The order was at length given, and at the sound of trumpets and clarions that mighty mass was put in motion.

Nothing could be more striking than the magnificent display presented by the formidable and splendid multitude, as it slowly moved down the plains of Toledo toward La Mancha. The number of banners and pennons streaming on the wind, the burnished helmets and glancing spears of so vast a number of knights, the blasts of martial instruments, the animating snorting and tramping of

the fiery steeds, the slow, undulating, yet regular movement of so many ranks of soldiers, the variety of armour and costume, and the shouts of hope that at intervals welcomed the words of the chiefs, and drowned the powerful notes of the warlike minstrelsy, all tended to strike the mind, and stir up the soul to enthusiasm. So immense was the quantity of provisions which the prudent King had thought proper to supply, that no less than seventy thousand beasts of burthen followed the army, loaded with the necessary stores.

In this manner they reached the steep and difficult mountains of La Mancha; and Alphonso, knowing that his enemy was eager to select an advantageous situation, as much depended upon his anticipating his movements, as the exaggerated reports which were brought concerning the greatness of the Moorish forces, rendered a favourable position a matter of serious importance. At that moment, a singular being, arrayed like a shepherd, but having in his countenance and whole appearance something superhuman, issued suddenly from a defile, and presented himself to Don Diego de Haro, and, in a tone of voice half deprecatory, half commanding, desired him to halt.

“What wouldst thou, man?” demanded the Castilian, in surprise.

“Lead the Christian arms to certain victory!”

“ And who and what art thou that darest make such mighty promise?”

“ I am,” answered the strange being, after some hesitation, “ a poor shepherd. I have had a dream, in which it has been disclosed to me that I should greatly contribute to a victory, which would be joyfully commemorated in Spain to the remotest posterity: follow me confidently; I am intimately acquainted with all the passes of this place, and will lead you, by the most convenient paths, to any situation which the King may think favourable to his plans.”

“ Then thou wilt act as a guide?”

“ A guide,” answered the shepherd, mysteriously, “ that will lead you to victory!”

Most of the Crusaders now began to look upon the strange shepherd with feelings of awe and respect. He was faithful to his promise, for he conducted the army in a short time by paths totally unknown to a most advantageous situation. This circumstance, together with his singular conduct and mysterious words during the march, led many to suppose that he was an angel; while others regarded him as a saint sent expressly from heaven to guide the course of the Christians. Indeed, almost all the army was confirmed in this opinion, when it was found that the pretended shepherd had disappeared when no longer wanted, and in a manner which no one could explain.

The spot to which this guide had conducted the Crusaders was a plain near a Moorish castle, called the Navas, or plains of Tolosa. The situation was advantageous, being supported by the mountains, and commanding a defile which the Moors could not defend without immense loss. Alphonso, in hourly expectation of the approach of the enemy, pitched his camp in this spot, and awaited the arrival of Mohammed with the most anxious spirit. The Moorish leader was not long in making his appearance. He came mounted on a milk-white horse, repeating aloud some verses of the Koran. As soon as he appeared in sight of the Christian army he ordered his own to halt. He then commanded his red pavilion, surmounted with a gold crescent, to be pitched on a little green knoll, from which he could command a full view of the battle; this tent was surrounded by his faithful guard, composed of the African blacks; the command and direction of the fight he intrusted to his Vizier, whilst he himself, seated on his shield, was to repeat aloud the verses of the Koran. His orders were punctually obeyed; the large banners were placed immediately before the red pavilion, surrounded with the trumpets and drums to animate the combatants, whilst the Vizier took his position at the head of the army. In this manner they awaited the attack of the foe, whom they wished to begin the contest.

This wish was soon accomplished, for the Christians were impatient to commence the combat, and it was with the utmost difficulty that the chiefs were able to restrain the rash impetuosity of their men. At length the signal was given, and, uttering aloud the war-cry of *Santiago! Santiago!* Don Diego de Haro and his adventurers rushed furiously to the charge. The onset was bravely sustained by the Moors, and at one moment they were advantageously repelling the aggression; but the King of Navarre, in whose division were the Knights Templars and those of Calatrava, coming speedily to the aid of Don Diego, an equal contest was maintained. At the same time the Moors of Cordova, thinking that by crossing the defile they should be able to surround the enemy, found themselves in a narrow passage almost without egress, and they were furiously attacked and slaughtered by the Portuguese, who flanked in ambuscade both sides of the defile. The order of battle was soon broken, and the action became general. Kings and grandees, and even prelates, fought like private soldiers; the animosity of the combatants was on both sides equal. Every knight, every sovereign, rivalled his fellow in prowess and resolution. Don Diego de Haro, Don Fernando de Lara, and several other cavaliers, gloriously distinguished themselves, but no one surpassed the daring courage of Alphonso of Castile, who, like the

spirit of war, was seen flying along in every direction, and dealing his mortal blows. Once he was nearly overpowered by numbers, when the Archbishop Roderick, who was at a short distance, came up, and, with an iron cross,* broke the line of the obstinate foes. The field was soon converted into a scene of indiscriminate slaughter and confusion. Helmets and turbans, spears, swords, and scimitars in promiscuous disorder rolled along the ensanguined plain, but no sign was yet visible, in either party, of diminished resolution.

At length the exertions of the Moors began to wax fainter. The carnage made on their companions, and the delay of the Prophet in coming to their assistance, began to dishearten many, whilst others surrendered through mere exhaustion. This only tended to increase the efforts of the Christians—every where was heard the cheering cry of *Santiago!* and the conviction that an angel had directed them in their march, added to the strength and courage of the Crusaders. The King of Navarre was now fast approaching towards the red pavilion, which being observed by the faithful guards, they boldly advanced and formed themselves into a triple chain to arrest the progress of the Christians and protect their beloved Mohammed.

* This is preserved to this day, and looked upon with veneration.

Many of the Andalusian Moors having been affronted by the Vizier, now retired from the field ; and this considerably heightened the confusion which already prevailed.

Meantime the Navarrese fiercely charged the line of black Africans: the struggle was fierce, and was only ended by the complete extinction of those devoted Moors, who died to a man. At that crisis, an Arab rushed into the red tent where Mohammed was still engaged in chanting aloud the verses of the Koran, and calling on the assistance of the Prophet.

“Oh ! most glorious commander,” he cried, in alarm, “save thyself ; the will of God is done—the Moslem is vanquished !”

“Avaunt ! what words are these ? who despairs ?”

“Oh ! save thyself, mighty chief—the day is lost—already the Christian horsemen press towards the tent, and in one moment more they will carry thy honoured head in triumph.”

“And has heaven abandoned the faithful ?” cried Mohammed, with a groan ; “Ah, me ! what offence have we committed to receive this dreadful punishment ?”

“Oh ! great commander, this is no time for exclamations ; mount my good steed and save thyself.”

But there was scarcely time for this operation ;

with much difficulty the Arab succeeded in helping his master to mount his own fleet horse, and then paid with his life his devotedness to Mohammed. Meantime, the unfortunate chief, attended by a few followers who joined him in the flight, was fast speeding from that field of desolation, uttering deep groans, and complaining to the Prophet for thus abandoning his people. He was moved even to tears when he saw the horrid slaughter which encumbered that disastrous field. The rising sun had shone upon an army formidable enough to fill with awe the most ferocious nations ; it now set on a scene of death and horror. The rays of that sun had seen Mohammed the dreaded leader of a powerful people—its parting beams lighted the headlong flight of a helpless and destitute fugitive. As he fled in dismay and sorrow from the fatal plain, the cries of his own men, and the exulting shouts of the conquerors came upon his ear, and filled his heart with the bitterness of despair. The few companions of his flight accompanied him in a gloomy silence. Thus did Mohammed quit a field, which, but the day before, he had fondly anticipated would be a scene of triumph.

The havoc made amongst the Moors was terrific. Soon as their commander had quitted the field, most of them threw down their arms, but no quarter was given by the Christians. In their ferocious

enthusiasm they cut down every thing that came before them bearing the semblance of their enemies. Thus it is not impossible that more than a hundred thousand* Moors should have remained lifeless on the field of battle. But what is more astonishing is, that the loss of the Christians was remarkably trifling; not more than half a dozen knights perished on that glorious day, and the total loss of the Crusaders, according to some writers, amounted only to twenty-five men. This account, however, no one is in conscience bound to believe, and it may, perhaps, be placed on a level with the other miraculous events connected with the history of this memorable battle.

It was reported that figures were seen fighting in the skies, which wore the resemblance of Christians and Moors; that the latter, after some opposition, were totally routed, and that strains of celestial music proclaimed the victory. The booty collected after the battle was immense. The care of this, as well as a want of repose, detained the Christian army in the field a whole day after the contest. On this occasion several squires and even simple soldiers were knighted by the hand of Alphonso, as one reward of their prowess. The joy produced by the victory was proportionate to the magnitude of the event. The conquerors returned

* Some authors say two hundred thousand.

to Toledo in triumphant procession, and the rejoicings were continued for several days. The King of Castile divided, with scrupulous precision, the spoils amongst his brothers in arms, and each one retired to his country, perfectly satisfied with the Crusade.

The King of Navarre, in commemoration of the famous battle of Tolosa, had a chain placed in the red shield of his arms, in allusion to the chain of African guards, who defended the red pavilion of Mohammed, and which was broken through by the Navarrese. In the same manner it is reported that the King of Castile, on account of the Moorish castle of Tolosa, adopted the golden castle then for the first time. Several other successes followed the important event described ; the city of Ubeda was taken, and various other conquests made with unusual rapidity. Indeed no less than a dozen towns fell to the share of the King of Navarre, whilst Alphonzo enjoyed the advantage of all those conquests which were made south of Toledo. Proportionate rewards were likewise bestowed upon the brave but inferior personages concerned in the battle, and strange to tell, not a single quarrel arose at the division of the spoil amongst so many, and such various claimants.

The glorious and ever memorable battle of the Navas of Tolosa was fought A. D. 1212. The effects which it produced in Spain were of the

highest moment. Since the conquest of that country by Tarif, the Moors had experienced no blow so terrible and disastrous in its effects. Hitherto the losses which they had sustained by the victories of the Christian arms had been soon partly, if not entirely repaired, but the defeat suffered at the Navas of Tolosa, was of a nature not to be easily remedied. It proved fatal to the Mahometan empire in Spain: from that great day the affairs of the two powers assumed a different aspect; the Christian took the ascendancy, and the authority of the Moslem began rapidly to decline.

Alphonso* the Eighth, surnamed the Noble, died two years after this glorious victory, bequeathing to posterity a name renowned no less for great deeds than for a generous and chivalrous disposition; a name indeed to which are attached the most interesting and romantic associations.

* Alonzo and Alphonso are the same, yet the Spanish historians, whilst they called every other King of the name Alonzo, designate this one Alphonso; this has induced me to do the same, the more so as it may break the monotony of the crowd of Alonzos so often to be met with in this work.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Kings of Castile and Leon.

A. D. 1217. FERDINAND the Third, son of Dona Berenguela, and of Alonzo, the Ninth King of Leon, was in Toro, with his father, from whom Dona Berenguela was separated, on account of their being related within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity. The Queen brought her son to Valladolid, where she renounced her title to the throne in favour of Ferdinand. The King of Leon was enraged at this, and began to commit depredations on the frontiers of Castile ; but the efficient measures adopted by Dona Berenguela soon succeeded in thwarting the ambitious designs of Alonzo. The tranquillity, however, was disturbed by the restless ambition of the Laras.

1230. Alonzo, King of Leon, died this year ; and, to show his dislike to his first wife and her son, left the kingdom to his daughters, Dona Sancha and Dona Dulce, whom he had by the Infanta of Portugal ; the princesses, however, upon receiving a stipulated sum of money, renounced their claims, and the crowns of Castile and Leon were united in Ferdinand. King Alonzo the Ninth founded the University of Salamanca.

1234. Ferdinand, having quieted the disturbances of his dominions, now devolved his whole thoughts towards the expulsion of the Saracens from Spain. He attacked Jaen, but was defeated ; he next besieged and took Ubeda, and finally he besieged Cordova. After some time an important tower fell into his hands, from which he could greatly annoy the enemy.

1235. Aben-Hud, King of Seville, sent troops to relieve Cordova, but were betrayed by the false account of a renegade Christian ; the defence of Cordova was carried on with great resolution, but the walls were taken, and, after fighting in every street, the Moors surrendered. Thus fell that capital of the Moorish power ; the magnificent mosque was converted into a Christian cathedral, and the bells of Santiago of Compostela, which Almanzor had taken from that church, were carried back on the shoulders of the prisoners.

1236. Baeza, Estapa, &c. &c. submitted to the King of Castile and Leon.

1245. Ferdinand besieged Jaen, and made a vow not to abandon the siege until the town surrendered ; Alhamar was amicably delivered up to the Christian King.

1247. This year the memorable conquest of Seville was begun. A merchant of Burgos, by name Ramon Boniface, was sent to attack Seville, from the Guadalquiver, with a powerful fleet ; in a naval engagement the Christians were victorious. King Ferdinand prosecuted the siege with vigour, and after eighteen months, it terminated in the surrender of the city. During this memorable siege many heroic feats were performed by knights of either party, especially by the Grand Master of Santiago and Garci Perez de Vargas. Great romantic interest has always attached to the conquest of Seville.

1252. Ferdinand died in Seville, in May of this year ; he was handsome, virtuous, and brave ; he began the code of laws called *Las Siete Partidas*, which was concluded by his son and successor, Alonzo the Wise. Ferdinand the Third was canonized by Clement X., A. D. 1671.

The Conquest of Seville.

King Ferdinand alone did stand
One day upon the hill,
Surveying all his leaguer
And the ramparts of Seville.
The sight was grand, when Ferdinand
By proud Seville was lying,
O'er tower and tree far off to see
The Christian banners flying.

SPANISH BALLAD.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE CONQUEST OF SEVILLE.

The Conquest of Seville.

SEVILLE, one of the most ancient and important cities of the Spanish peninsula, possesses every advantage of climate and situation. A clear and benignant atmosphere, and bright but temperate suns, ensure the beauty and fertility of its territory; while, situated in the hollow of a luxuriant valley, bounded by wild and magnificent mountains, it commands on all sides the most lovely and picturesque scenery. In addition to these advantages, which contribute so greatly to the beauty of this venerable city, the noble stream of the Guadalquivir passes through its populous streets, giving salubrity to the air, and bearing on its bosom the riches of a prosperous commerce.

Seville, under the rule of the Almohade Moors, had become a rich and powerful emporium. This consideration, added to the fertility of its territory and the advantages to be derived from its river, were great temptations to induce the Christians to achieve its conquest. Hitherto, however, that grand event had not taken place, and it remained for the glorious Ferdinand the Third, surnamed the Saint, to attempt, and succeed in so splendid

an undertaking. After the conquest of Cordova, Ferdinand had devolved all his attention upon a similar enterprize with regard to Seville. At the head, therefore, of a gallant army, and accompanied by the most renowned knights of the age, he appeared before the walls of the city, and commenced a vigorous siege. Amongst the crowd of warriors who attended the King in this expedition, there was one called Garci Perez de Vargas, who particularly distinguished himself in this memorable conquest. Nor did Alhamar, the Moorish King of Granada, and the ally of Ferdinand, render himself less deserving of admiration.

Alhamar, however, could never taste the cup of glory without finding in it some particles of gall. Feelings of enmity and revenge had induced him to take arms against the Moorish ruler of Seville; but neither these feelings nor the consciousness of being treated with the greatest respect and friendship by the Christian King, nor even the conviction that he was obliged by policy to be rather the ally than the foe of Ferdinand, could obliterate from his mind the idea that he was fighting against his own brethren, and adding strength to his natural enemies. Thus a pang of sorrow continually visited the heart of Alhamar, and a cloud of gloom darkened his brow even in the moment of triumph.

But there was no alloy in the excitement and

glory of the Christian knight, Garci Perez de Vargas ; he fought for his country and religion ; and the hope of acquiring additional renown seemed solely to engross his attention, and stimulate him to the most gallant feats of arms. Yet at intervals an unpleasant thought obtruded on his reveries, and marred for a moment the sweet illusion. The effect, however, was scarcely perceptible on the countenance of the Castilian knight ; the ungentle sensation came rapidly, and vanished like the flimsy vapour of a passing shadow, which, though it may momentarily throw a reflexion over a brilliant sky, can have no lasting influence on its brightness.

A strong friendship had been cemented between Alhamar and Vargas. A similarity of taste and pursuit, an equal love of courage, and the same thirst after glorious deeds, had first made them admire each other, and then united them in the bonds of brotherly affection and most devoted friendship. But, despite of the habits of frankness and confidence which existed between the two knights, the Christian felt chagrined that there was a point on which the Moor always refused him his confidence ; the cause of that melancholy, which preyed upon his mind, he could never be induced to unfold ; and the unwearied exertions of Vargas tended only to augment the distress of his friend. Thus he was at length persuaded to desist from his importu-

nities, and leave to chance or time the discovery of the painful mystery.

The besieged had made a sally, which, though vigorously carried on, proved ineffectual ; for they were repulsed and compelled to retreat into the city with considerable loss. On this occasion, as usual, among the warriors that distinguished themselves were Alhamar and Vargas ; the Moor specially had been so eager in the pursuit, that he had nearly fallen a victim to his intrepidity. His animosity seemed principally to be excited against a group of Moors, commanded by a leader remarkable for his proud bearing and the rich crimson scarf which he wore. Between this warrior and Alhamar a conflict was begun with equal fierceness on either side. The combatants were well matched, and the engagement would have been long protracted but for some of the Sevillian Moors, who came up to the aid of their leader. It was then that Alhamar found himself involved in imminent danger. He fought with the efforts of desperation ; but was on the point of sinking under the accumulated efforts of so many foes, when, fortunately, Garci Perez de Vargas saw the peril of his friend, and rushed to his assistance.

His presence quickly changed the aspect of the affair. The Moors, despite of their resolution, were not proof against the prowess of the two single warriors ; and, after a faint opposition, they

were obliged to retrace their steps to Seville, full of rage and confusion; whilst Alhamar most cordially embraced Vargas for having so timely arrived to his support. King Ferdinand congratulated the two friends on their exploits, but while Alhamar testified his acknowledgments of the King's regard, the same sad smile played on his lip, the same melancholy expression was visible on his countenance. Indeed it appeared that some event had taken place of late to heighten his gloomy disposition. He retired to his tent, and, crossing his arms, sat in a pensive mood, solitary and dejected. In this attitude he was surprised by Vargas, who, deeply moved at the increasing despondency of his friend, came to bear him company, and see if he could in any way contribute to alleviate the sorrow that preyed upon his mind. Alhamar greeted his friend with the usual melancholy smile.

"Ah! my kind companion and brave Vargas, how great are the services for which I am indebted to thee; it is not long since you saved my life. Believe me it is sweet, not humiliating, to be thy debtor, and in such a character I shall always feel pleasure to stand before Garci Perez de Vargas."

"And yet, my friend," said Vargas in a gentle tone of rebuke, "thou dost not scruple to deprive the man whom thou thinkest deserving of so much affection of the most gratifying privileges of friend-

ship — yes, thou darest divest that holy sentiment of one of its best attributes.”

“What sayest thou, Vargas? Do I indeed merit this reproach?”

“Yes, most fully. Am I not defrauded of thy confidence? Does not a cankering sorrow gnaw thy heart, whilst I, the friend whose zeal you commend, am ignorant of the baneful secret, and unable to provide any comfort or remedy to the evil? Sir Knight, this is not seemly. Be sure that Vargas hath no secret from Alhamar, and he may justly complain when he perceives no suitable return made to his own unlimited confidence.”

A pause ensued, during which the mind of the Moor seemed to undergo a powerful revolution. He fixed his dark expressive eyes on Vargas; his breast heaved violently, and he gave every symptom of unusual emotion. He then said —

“My kind, my true friend, often has thy solicitude and anxious regard prompted thee to search into the cause of the secret sorrow that rends my heart; and as often have I repulsed thy kind exertions, determined that the mystery which renders me unhappy should descend with me to the grave. But this resolution, which I thought once unconquerable, must now yield to the repeated proofs of thy friendship, of whose counsel and soothing aid I stand so much in need.”

As he pronounced these words his agitation redoubled, and he leant for support on Vargas.

“Fie, noble Alhamar,” said the Castilian, “this must not be; however heavy the misfortune that weighs thee down, surely it cannot be superior to the manly courage which renders thee so worthy of admiration.”

“Alack!” returned the Moor despondingly, “thou mayst well be amazed at these symptoms of weakness in a warrior; but oh, my friend, couldst thou but cast a hurried glance over the chilled desolation of this heart, formed to cherish the most generous sentiments, and now ruefully fostering the most venomous passions that can afflict and degrade human nature! Yet so it is, in the whole extent of this camp there is not one more supremely wretched than Alhamar, than the warrior on whom many look with respect, and many more with dread or jealousy; and this calamity which unnerves me, oh! Vargas, I blush deeply to confess.”

“Surely Alhamar can be guilty of nought derogatory to the honour and character of a knight?” returned the Castilian.

“The Christian King hath supposed,” rejoined the Moor, with more calmness, “that the duties of an ally, added to some grievances of the Sevillian King, have solely instigated me to come before the walls of this city: how grossly are all mistaken that entertain this idea! I wage war against my

brethren: yes, O Vargas, with feelings of shame I confess it, I unite my strength against those of my religion to satisfy a wild craving of private revenge. Nay, start not, the motive may appear base to thy noble nature; but, oh! condemn me not until the cause be named that produced this fiendish—this uncontrollable feeling. If ever man was deeply, inhumanly wronged, 'tis I; if ever the parching thirst of vengeance could be permitted to be allayed, 'tis in my case. But why should I fatigue thee with the idle description of my sorrow and my wrongs? 'tis enough to know that I was mercilessly injured, and that I seek a retribution, equally pitiless, of my foe—and this foe is the son of the King of Seville, and the heir to his dominions."

"And how did his offences affect thee?" inquired Vargas.

"Alas! he assumed the character of which he was totally undeserving. Yes, he feigned that friendship which his cold, his obdurate heart could never feel. He came to my court at Granada intrusted with a mission from his father; I received him with the most cordial hospitality, and neglected no opportunity of showing my attention and regard by all the means within my power. What was his return to all my kindness? Oh! may a curse deep as the anguish of my soul fall on the miscreant! — The false Aben-Ismaël, in violation of the most sacred laws of hospitality, deprived me

of the richest treasure of my heart. Aye! he showed his gratitude by forcibly carrying away my adored, my betrothed Morima, leaving me in utter desolation of soul."

"You surely reclaimed her at the court of Seville?"

"I did repeatedly, but all my endeavours proved without effect. I represented to the King of your city, the blackness of his son's offence, and required that Morima should be immediately sent back to Granada, but my remonstrances were void of success. At first the King essayed to tamper my patience with delusive hopes, then he threw off the mask, and appeared ready to countenance the treachery of his son. Such conduct naturally enough excited in my breast feelings of the deepest revenge. I made a fearful vow — a vow which I now begin to fulfil, and which, at the expense of treasure, and kingdom, and life, I shall most faithfully accomplish. I took arms against those of my religion, I joined King Ferdinand, and you behold me now, oh! Vargas, the most bitter, and one of the most determined of this city's enemies."

"And the unfortunate Morima?" inquired the Castilian.

"She lives," replied Alhamar, with a groan, "if a continual succession of sorrows deserve the name of life. She lives, alas! shut up in the palace of Seville, with no hope to diminish the gloom of her situation, but that of a speedy death

—a lot which her sufferings cannot be long in procuring.”

“And thy bitter foe, Alhamar, hast thou not had an opportunity of meeting the traitor face to face?”

“But once; and then my vengeful cravings were again baffled; nay, had it not been for thy timely assistance, I should myself have been the victim of my rage.”

“What, mean you then that the proud chief, with the broad crimson scarf—the Moor against whom I saw you fiercely combating?”

“Was my hated foe; yes, Vargas;” said the Moor bitterly, “and that scarf which he so proudly displays, was a token of affection which my unfortunate Morima was preparing for me when the miscreant Ismaël effected his iniquitous robbery. Now, Sir Castilian, thou knowest why the cloud that darkens my brow, is to-day more dense than ever. Oh! could my arm have stretched the villain on the ground, what a painful load would have been removed from my breast. May the Prophet keep me in life and full strength, and this desire, this burning craving that fills my soul, shall yet be amply satisfied.”

“Be of good spirit, noble Moor,” said the Castilian in a consoling tone, “for thy enemy shall reap the recompense of his ingratitude.”

“Yes; but were he to fall by any other arm than mine, the most soothing of my hopes would be annihilated.”

“The remedy is easy,” said Vargas: “thou must send a cartel to the traitor, that he may meet you in mortal combat. I myself, knowing that Ismaël has the reputation of being a knight of great prowess, was eager to measure my strength and skill with his, but I will gladly forego this desire for thy sake, and will engage some other Moorish warrior in his stead.”

“Thanks, my kind friend. Then let the message to Seville be sent with all possible despatch.”

“To-morrow this preliminary shall be put into execution.”

The two friends then separated for the night. The mind of Alhamar felt greatly relieved by the attentions of Vargas, and more especially by the hope that ere long he would have an opportunity of meeting his direst foe in fearful battle. This terrible idea served to compose his turbulent spirits, and to shed in his desponding bosom some rays of consolation. Garci Perez de Vargas meantime was not exempt from experiencing that galling, though momentary pang which disturbed the composure of his soul. Upon leaving the tent of Alhamar, his eyes met those of a Castilian noble, who was the cause of his uneasiness. This proud grandee, a powerful lord, and a descendant of a great house, had uttered some words, which, though not amounting to a direct affront, served greatly to inflame the generous choler of Vargas. The haughty Castilian had affected to look upon the latter

knight with a degree of contempt. He had even whispered that he doubted whether the right of Vargas to wear the arms emblazoned on his shield was good. This last insinuation had fired Vargas with indignation, and he had accordingly challenged the grandee; but the King had interposed, for, knowing that a perfect union was the first requisite to effect the conquest in which he was engaged, he felt painfully annoyed that any private feuds amongst his own knights should compromise the success of the undertaking.

The generous Vargas, though he had yielded to the persuasion of King Ferdinand, was yet mortified at the reflection cast upon his character. He was justly proud of his birth, and fully entitled to the arms which he bore on his shield. The arms displayed a red-cross and a tree, in record of the Spanish Crusade, in which the father of Vargas had greatly distinguished himself: yet as his wealth was not comparable to that of the grandee, nor his retainers so numerous as that proud lord's, the latter affected to look on Garci Perez as little better than a knight-adventurer, who, poor and needy, sought to advance his fortune by arms. This conviction, and the significant glances with which he had expressed it, when, owing to the King's command, he dared not do it by words, had been a source of disquiet against which not even the manly and stout heart of Vargas seemed proof.

On the present occasion he met Don Iñigo de

Haro, the lord in question, who passed him with cold indifference, if not contempt. Vargas had felt a violent inclination to draw his weapon, but was restrained by the idea that the death of his enemy under such circumstances would tend rather to strengthen than to remove the vile insinuation which he had circulated. But his heart was powerfully inflamed, and he burned to have an opportunity of effacing the blot which stained his most pleasing prospects. Ruminating on this, as well as on Alhamar's story, he retired to rest for the night, resolved to seek a remedy for both on the following day.

This at length dawned, and early in the morning Vargas presented himself before the King.

"Well, Sir Garci Perez," said Ferdinand, in a gay tone, "what can the King of Castile do to oblige one of his best and bravest knights?"

"My liege," answered Vargas, respectfully, "I have a boon to request—a boon which, by all the laws of knighthood, ought to be granted."

"Speak, Sir Castilian, speak, and rest confident that Ferdinand, a true knight himself, cannot unjustly deny the requests of his companions."

"I knew, great King," returned the Castilian, "that your courtesy was equal to your valour; and this emboldened me to prefer my suit. It is well known to you, my liege, that the proud Don Iñigo de Haro has, on more than one occasion, sorely offended me by the most ungenerous in-

sinuations. The shield which I wear was transmitted to me by my noble and heroic father, whose feats at the battle of the Navas are justly celebrated; the coat of arms I bear in good right, and that honourable badge I hope to leave to my heir with additional brilliancy. But great as is the merit which I derive from the glory of my ancestors, I shall feel more justly proud of the renown which I acquire by my own achievements. We are now engaged in a grand conquest, and among the names that this event shall render immortal, that of Don Garci Perez de Vargas will stand second to none but King Ferdinand's."

"Of thy merit and prowess, good Knight, I am well convinced, and would match thee confidently against the best warrior, Christian or Moor."

"My liege, that opinion is highly honourable, and confers a proud distinction on the object of it. Yet I would present a striking and unanswerable evidence to silence the calumny of the envious or incredulous. With your kind approval, I will send an invitation to the first warriors of Seville, to choose their champions to meet us two to one, to the number of a dozen."

"Nay, Sir Knight," said the King gravely, "that I could scarcely permit. It would be sporting the lives of my warriors away, when they are so indispensable for the service of their country."

"Then," said Vargas, discontentedly, "our ally, the Moor, will be more propitious to my suit; for

Alhamar is to be one of my companions, and the rest must be chosen from his ranks, since the Christian King refuses my request."

Saying this he made a slight bow, and was about to depart, when the King cried out—

"Stay, Sir Knight, I would not for the best castle in my dominions, cause a moment of displeasure to Garci Perez de Vargas. What champions would you select for this combat?"

"King Alhamar and his brother Selim, amongst the Moorish allies; and from the Christian ranks my good friend and great knight, Leon Pelayo Correa, who so worthily fills the mastership of Santiago, Don Garceran de Lara, and myself." Then he added with a smile, "still there is a knight wanting to complete the half-dozen, and, to show my respect for Don Iñigo de Haro, as well as that an occasion may present itself of proving who is the most deserving, he shall make up the number of our combatants."

"Yet," returned the King, "though your choice argues great judgment, the odds that you wish to meet are dangerous."

"On the prowess of five of those champions," said Vargas, smiling, "I can rely implicit confidence. I know none will object to face two adversaries, and as for the sixth, if he does not his duty, he will acquire a little more moderation from the mischance, if it fail to confer honour on his name."

The proposal of the Castilian knight was made known to the elected champions, and they all but one appeared to receive it with heartfelt approbation. Alhamar, instigated at once by the contending passion of glory, love, and revenge, burned for the moment of combat to arrive. The master of Santiago and Lara evinced an equal degree of resolution; all in fine but the proud Lord of Haro, entered most willingly into the views of Garci Perez. The arrogant detractor of Vargas at first gave a tame assent, qualifying however the undertaking with the title of madness and folly.

“So thy opinion, noble Haro,” demanded the King, “seems to incline against the combat?”

“My liege,” answered Haro, “I shall ever be amongst the foremost in battle, but I see no necessity for this partial conflict, much less when no one obliges us to meet disadvantageous odds. This feat is only undertaken to prove the prowess of your knights, and methinks the Moors of Seville stand in no need of this additional evidence. Besides,” he continued in a haughty tone of voice, “my King is not to be the leader in this achievement, and Don Iñigo de Haro will recognize no other chief.”

As he said this, he cast a proud glance of scorn on Vargas, who met the implied insult with stern composure. But Alhamar, fired with indignation, in a loud voice exclaimed—

“Methinks the Lord of Haro would not feel de-

graded in the estimation of any knight, squire, or base-born, by fighting under the guidance of Garci Perez de Vargas, or in sooth of any of the other knights selected for this enterprise. But let that proud Sir learn that, however conspicuous that gallant Castilian whom he hath so often provoked, may appear in this transaction, it is not he, but a King—the King of Granada, who is to be the supposed leader of a feat in which they are all equals.”

“The King of Granada,” replied Haro, with superadded haughtiness, “is a brave knight, and a powerful personage in his own dominions, but the Lord of Haro hath not yet acknowledged his jurisdiction.”

“How convenient is that pride,” said Vargas, with a scornful smile, “which may serve to cover a less dignified sensation?”

Haro fixed his eyes ferociously on Vargas, and was on the point of provoking that knight to some lamentable act when happily the King interposed, and diverted the general attention to the topic that specially occupied the champions.

“Brave knights,” he said, “this is an undertaking purely of choice, and I say that no one has a right to stigmatize any noble for not entering into his own ideas. If my Lord of Haro feel any objection to make one of the champions, he is perfectly justified in so doing, nor can any man rebuke him for his conduct. At the same time there are

other knights who would consider themselves highly honoured by the summons which called them to this honourable pass. Therefore let our good brother and ally the King of Granada, and the valiant Garci Perez de Vargas select another champion from the splendid ranks that fill my camp."

This conciliatory speech came in time to prevent a painful debate, the results of which were dreaded by the King. The warriors readily acquiesced in the proposal, and Don Tello de Osorio was chosen to occupy the place of the arrogant Haro. This affair being ultimately adjusted, it was next determined that the challenge should be sent to Ismaël with all becoming pomp and ceremony. An embassy was named to carry the defiance to Seville, at the head of which was placed Selim, the brother of Alhamar. This was done both at the instigation of Vargas, and by the private wish of the King of Granada, who, being the person aggrieved, was glad to send his nearest relative with the expression of his bitter indignation and mortal defiance.

Every thing being in readiness, the embassy left the camp, and proceeded towards Seville, accompanied by the strains of trumpets. A parley was ordered, and the messengers were blindfolded, and let into the city with the usual precautions and ceremony. When the bandage was taken from his eyes, Selim and his companions found themselves in a gorgeous apartment of the palace. The place

was filled with the principal members of the court; the King sat on his throne, and was surrounded by his son, the false Ismaël, and the rest of his chiefs.

“What message is this?” demanded the King, “what proposal has the ambitious Ferdinand to make? Methinks the embassy would wear a more befitting aspect, if a Christian, instead of a false Moor, were at the head of it.”

“King of Seville,” proudly replied Selim, “I come not here to listen to thy ungenerous rebukes; but to utter the words of just indignation. It is not the Christian Sovereign, but the King of Granada—that King so foully wronged, who sends me hither; and it is not to make any proposals of negotiation concerning the siege that I am commissioned, but to challenge to mortal combat my brother’s aggressor and eleven more of your best warriors. My brother and myself, and four Christian knights, shall meet those odds in a plain betwixt the walls of the city and the camp.”

“The insolence of Alhamar,” resumed the King with bitterness, “can only be equalled by his abominable treason, in joining with the Christian against those of his own creed.”

“It ill becomes thee, Xaraf,” replied Selim, “to speak thus, the father of the blackest traitor contained within the limits of the world. Dost thou forget the infernal ingratitude of Ismaël, when he came in friendly guise, and was so fraternally wel-

comed in Granada by the generous Alhamar? Hast thou buried in oblivion the scorn and indifference with which the just complaints and reclamations of my brother were treated? But the crime hath been doubly heightened by the character of the offender; thou, oh! Xaraf, from a petty ruler assuming the title of King, ill-secure in that new station, wert eager to cultivate the friendship and win the protection of the King of Granada. A foolish arrogance and blind confidence in thy own resources impelled thee soon after to change thy line of conduct; the base treason, the crime of thy son, was sanctioned by thee, and when Alhamar is thus compelled to seek a just retribution, why shouldst thou feel surprise or indignation at his resolves? Couldst thou expect that the offence of Ismaël should pass away unvisited and unrequited?—foolish hope!—proud confidence! No, the mortal wound inflicted on the happiness of Alhamar, the ruffian-like violence committed against the fair Morima, shall meet a dreadful punishment. Aye, nothing less than the total ruin of thy dominion and the death of the cruel offender. But until that fateful moment arrive, the fierce anger of the injured Alhamar cannot be restrained, and the present challenge will be a token of the animosity by which he is inflamed.”

“That animosity?” cried Ismaël, scornfully, “I despise as much as I loath the craven spirit of a Moor, who joins the Christian; a renegade who, to

satisfy his own private revenge, strives to accomplish the ruin of the Moslem. But that wrath shall be as impotent in its effects as it is despicable in its origin ; and Alhamar shall be taught repentance for his apostacy. Aye, when he bites the ensanguined ground, when his sinful soul, preparing to take its flight, shall hear the ominous voice of Ismaël ringing in his despairing ear the retribution that awaits his base dereliction ; yes, then the King of Granada will repent, but too late, the fearful resolution which he has taken. And now, false Moor, return to the Christian camp, and let those who send thee know that Ismaël shall, on the third day from this, be ready to join him in mortal conflict ; the arrogance of the challengers in defying a double number of foes, is indeed worthy of general derision. Methinks an even number of combatants would bring the contest to something approaching an equality ; yet that arrogance shall meet its due reward, and I accept the challenge as it is sent ; twelve Moors shall leave Seville on the appointed day to meet the Christian champions and their traitorous allies. By this the victory is doubly secured, and the false Alhamar shall not be able to escape the just award of his apostacy."

After this the messengers were blindfolded, and led out of the city with the same ceremony that had accompanied their entrance. Selim upon his return to the camp, gave a faithful account of his embassy, which contributed to add fuel to the

terrific fire which already raged in the heart of his brother. The contumelious language which strengthened the wrongs of Ismaël, threw the ardent Alhamar into the most violent agitation. He anxiously longed for the moment of the dreadful conflict, and it was in vain that Selim and Vargas used their utmost endeavours to sooth the irritation of his soul.

The rest of the champions prepared themselves without delay for the approaching contest. The armour was polished with scrupulous care, the faithful chargers were assiduously tended, and the warlike equipments were made in due order. The whole camp was thrown into no common degree of excitement at the prospect of the mortal conflict ; the bold confidence and rash intrepidity of their companions filled them at once with alarm and admiration. It was well known that amongst the Moors of Seville there were knights of great prowess and renown, and to meet a double number of such antagonists savoured more of the instigations of blind madness than of the impulse of rational courage.

But such ideas were not entertained by Alhamar, Vargas, or any other of the champions ; who all evinced an equal degree of eagerness for the engagement, though the anxiety of all was not marked by that sombre tint of ferocious revenge which animated the heart of the King of Granada. A truce was proclaimed during the three days pre-

ceding the combat, and which was also to last one day more after that event. This suspension of hostilities enabled both parties to devote themselves exclusively to the preparations of the fight. A space of ground capacious enough for the purpose was selected by mutual assent in a convenient situation between the city and the camp. This spot was appropriated for the lists, not of a splendid tournament, but of a sanguinary combat. To prevent, however, any calamitous disturbance consequent on the challenge, it was decided that neither Christian nor Moor should approach within a certain distance of the apportioned piece of ground. A guard, composed of an equal number of soldiers, was also to be placed on both sides; the Moorish by the walls of the city, and the Christian in front of the camp of Ferdinand.

All these arrangements being made and executed, every one awaited in impatience the great moment; and when the eve of the fateful day at length arrived, a constant murmur and unusual excitement was discernible both in Seville and in the Christian ranks.

Whilst both parties experienced this unusual ferment, the wretched Morima, the innocent cause of the stirring event, was indulging her unconquerable sorrow in a sequestered apartment of the palace. The unfortunate bride of Alhamar was, if possible, the victim of a far more excruciating torture than that which lacerated the heart of her be-

trothed lover. The savage Ismaël was an object of her fell abhorrence and deepest scorn ; nor was the treatment which he rendered his lovely captive fitted to inspire her with sentiments of a different tendency. She had from the commencement vigorously resisted the importunities of the Moor. His endearments and promises had met with all the contempt they deserved. Nothing could conquer the aversion with which Morima greeted every fresh visit of her persecutor, till at length the savage Ismaël, enraged at the ill success of his suit, and impatient of control, resolved to accomplish by means of violence what persuasion failed to obtain.

He began his dastard work of oppression by confining the helpless object of his fiendish passion to a solitary apartment of the large palace, where the expression of her affliction could not be seen, nor her cries of lamentation heard. Thus he was sure that her sufferings would not excite the sympathy of any humane Moor. In that seclusion she was rigorously kept until she should yield to the wishes of Ismaël, and become his bride. She was not allowed the society of any one, except an old hag, who only made her appearance to increase her torments, and the indispensable attendants who were to provide the necessaries of life. In this lonesome confinement the lovely sufferer lingered day after day, being obliged, as an additional sorrow, to sustain a visit from her oppressor, who was

unremitting in his exertions to weary out the resolution of his victim.

It was on the night that preceded the mortal combat, that Morima was sitting abstracted in the most gloomy reverie ; a solitary lamp glimmered dimly, and only afforded sufficient light to render darkness more appalling. The afflicted girl had heard something concerning the approaching contest, and she knew that her beloved Alhamar was before the walls of Seville ; and thus, amidst the awful obscurity of her meditations, there flashed at intervals some rays of hope that tended to make her situation somewhat less bitter and oppressive.

At this moment she was startled by the unexpected appearance of Ismaël ; the lateness of the hour awoke her wildest fears, as her oppressor was accustomed to make his visits at noon. She was aroused to desperate courage by the imminency of the danger, and seized the iron lamp as the only weapon she could obtain. Ismaël, with a sardonic smile, stood calmly contemplating his victim for a moment, then in a tranquil tone of voice said—

“Morima, fear not : it is not in a spirit of love or revenge that I come, but merely to bid thee farewell.”

“Farewell ! ah ! false Moor, what new deception dost thou contemplate to delude my hopes, and plunge me still deeper in the abyss of misery. Speak ! what fresh calamity is to fall on the devoted head of thy victim ?”

“That victim might be my bride,” answered the Moor, in bitter disappointment, “but her stubborn heart prefers the hatred of Ismaël to his love ; the transformation will now be speedily effected ; but woe to thee ! wretched maid ! that hatred shall be as fatal in its results, as my love has been boundless and absorbing.”

“Ah ! miscreant ! attempt not to terrify me. No, thy menaces cannot convey one particle of the horror which thy vows of affection are sure to produce. I tremble not at the base instigations of thy vengeance, for that vengeance shall be most welcome to Morima, if it decrees her death.”

“In sooth that fiery courage would be cooled, if the experiment were tried ; but console thyself with the conviction that the fate thou desirest may not be so remote as thy heart may conceive.”

“Thanks to the Prophet, then, that has heard the unceasing prayer of my sorrow ; thanks to that pitying heaven which looks at length with compassion on the helpless Morima.”

“Blaspheme not thus, foolish girl ; nor abandon thy soul to unreasonable joy ; for the death which I promised thee is only conditional. Exult not, for thou shalt only receive death at the moment when life would confer happiness supreme on thee. Ay,” he then added, his eyes glistening with ferocious satisfaction, “it will be to render thee tenfold more wretched, not to end thy misery, that death shall come ; that doom shall appear to thy

eyes, apparelled in the darkest livery of despair, not in the semblance of a liberator from an odious existence."

Morima looked earnestly on the savage Moor, and soon perceived on his spiteful features the boding evidence of some fiendish machination. A powerful sensation of awe filled her heart—the resolute courage which had previously braced her nerves to any attempt, now seemed to relax; and she trembled with an apprehension she could not define. After a short pause, in a tone of calm atrocity, the Moor continued—

"Yes, deluded girl; thou must know, that even the wretched boon thou prayest for, is denied thee; and now thou must lend thy ear to equally fatal intelligence. Thy beloved Alhamar, my hated foe, is now before the walls of this city, uniting with the Christian against the followers of the holy Prophet. He fondly hopes that his treason will be crowned with success, and that, by the conquest of Seville, he will be the deliverer of Morima. Such expectations can never be fulfilled, should even this city, God forefend! fall into the power of the King of Castile. No, Alhamar and Morima are doomed never again to see each other alive."

He fixed his eyes on his victim with an expression of malignant exultation, whilst the mournful sufferer uttered a sigh of hopelessness and affliction. The Moor, after a pause, continued—

“The false Alhamar thinking, no doubt, that the reduction of this city is not a task to achieve so easily as he might wish, provokes me to meet him in mortal combat ; and I, of course, am most willing not to reject his invitation. My foe cannot hate me more intensely than I abhor him ; and my reason for this rancorous aversion is thy love to the traitor.”

“Cease, monster !—Cease, thou dark prodigy of ingratitude,” cried Morima. “His hate is the genuine offspring of weighty injury—thine the malignant temperament of a demon. Thou feelest aversion to a generous hero, because he was kind and hospitable to thee. But thy ingratitude shall at last awaken the wrath of the Prophet, and the moment of the approaching combat will be the signal of thy doom. Yes, thou shalt meet thy death from the arm of the man thou hast so deeply, so mercilessly injured.”

“Should that fate await me,” answered the Moor, with horrid calmness, while a bitter smile curled on his lip, “thy own death shall closely follow mine. Ah ! the deluded Alhamar, the mad renegade, inwardly congratulates himself that, should his arm by some unaccountable chance prove victorious, Morima will be the reward of his conquest. Let him cherish the pleasing dream, for the awaking disappointment will be the more galling. And now farewell : should I again appear before thee, it will be dyed with the blood of my

hated rival; but should any one but myself acquaint thee with the issue of the combat, that moment thou mayest prepare for death. Farewell, proud maid; thou hast scorned the love of Ismaël; the dreadful effects of his aversion will soon fall upon thy head with all the weight of deepest malediction."

He cast a fearful glance on his victim; then, in a hurried manner, left the apartment. At first a feeling of horror chilled the heart of Morima. The cruel words of the Moor, and the ferocious sternness in which they were pronounced, could not but excite a proportionate sensation of gloomy dread. Then the despairing conviction that she was doomed never more to behold again her beloved Alhamar, added a new torture to the load of wretchedness that lacerated her heart. Unrelenting misery — hopeless despair presented themselves on every side to her view. Either her lover or herself must die. She knew the nature of Ismaël too well not to be convinced that he would cause his threat to be carried into effect without pity or remorse. And yet this alternative was the less dreadful of the two. And it was for this event that the disconsolate captive now directed her fervent prayers to heaven.

Meantime the ruthless Ismaël withdrew to his apartment, accompanied by Morax, a ferocious Moor, and his bosom confidant.

"Come hither, Morax," he said, in a low sombre

tone ; "I think I can put full reliance on thy zeal and fidelity."

"Most noble Ismaël, to doubt it, would be to bestow the most ungenerous affront on Morax. I owe thee much, too much ; the debt of gratitude is indeed so great, that nothing which I can do in return will be sufficient compensation."

"'Tis well that such are thy thoughts, Morax," resumed Ismaël ; "for the moment is come when thy friendship and boasted gratitude are likely to be subjected to a trial."

"Speak!" cried the Moor, "I will do all to serve thee."

"Thou knowest, my friend," proceeded his master, "that to-morrow is the day appointed for the conflict provoked by the false, the perjured Moor, Alhamar?"

"Yes, but you surely cannot doubt the issue of the contest? Every advantage is on our side : twelve gallant warriors will engage against six, and the sacred Prophet will besides befriend the party that fights for his honour and renown."

"That victory will pronounce itself on our side, I cherish the most sanguine expectations ; but yet I should be prepared against all contingencies."

"I object not to the views of prudence," said Morax.

"Well, 'tis by that prudence that I wish to be guided, and 'tis by her dictates that I have con-

ceived the project which I am now about to confide to thy bosom."

He paused—then, in a more solemn tone, resumed—

"Should necessity require it, couldst thou, Morax, shut thy heart and ears against the most piercing cries of agony? Couldst thou, unnerved, in calm ferocity, see the tears of woman in despair: her eyes rolling in wildness, her lamentations shrill with horror, and her whole frame transformed into the frightful and chilling image of agony?"

"I could," answered the Moor, with tranquil and steady ferocity.

"And couldst thou, likewise, to serve thy benefactor," proceeded Ismaël, "plunge thy weapon, with merciless resolution, into the bosom of woman, young and lovely, and beauteous, and in the despair which I have portrayed to thee?"

"Yes," answered Morax, with the same decision of tone and manner.

"'Tis well, give me thy hand, Morax."

"Yet I cannot well conceive how this service can be necessary to you on the present occasion."

"Listen, and thy wonder will cease: suppose unpropitious fate decree that I should fall in the combat——"

"Nay, that is next to an impossibility!"

"I admit your persuasion—still such an event,

though extraordinary — miraculous, I may say — might happen.”

“Well?”

“It is in this melancholy case that the ministry of thy zeal will be serviceable to me.”

“I would boldly expose my life to revenge your death!”

“Hold, ’tis not that service I would have thee attempt; the man who was not prostrated by the arm of Ismaël, it can scarcely be hoped would fall by that of any other Moor. Yet, were even such a thing attainable, it is not the proof which I require of thy gratitude for my favours.”

“Proceed. I will faithfully follow thy instructions.”

“Thou knowest the violent passion that has long consumed my soul for Morima, and the ungrateful return she has invariably made to all my kindness. My love is now converted into something so bitter, so darksome, that hatred would be too tame a word to designate it.”

“Can this be possible?” exclaimed Morax, in astonishment.

“It can—it is; and if anything could heighten the absorbing gall, the fiery tortures of this gloomy feeling, it would be the conviction that, on my death, the detested Alhamar and Morima would find no obstruction to their union and happiness.”

“Such an event can never be,” said Morax.

“It is to prevent its fatal occurrence that I

request thy aid. Soon as the combat is decided—should I be numbered amongst the slain—that very moment Morima must be secretly put to death.”

“Nay, Ismaël; you——”

“Forbear—thy remonstrances are vain. What! is this thy loudly blazoned zeal—thy deep-felt friendship? Does thy heart fail?”

“No! you wrong me. My seeming hesitation arose not from a want of firmness to do the deed, but from an absorbing sensation of amazement that you should be eager for the sacrifice. This shall be unrelentingly executed, if such be really thy ultimate instructions.”

“I am fixed in my resolves; fixed as the solid massy rock that laughs to scorn the impotent rage of the lashing waves. The certainty of thy adherence to thy promise would alone soothe the bitterness of my last moments.”

“Heaven, and the sacred Prophet, keep such a calamity afar. No, brave Ismaël, victory will crown thy exertions. Yet, rest assured, that should the agency of my zeal be unfortunately required—that zeal will prompt me to perform thy desires with a blind devotion—a resolution not to be shaken.”

“That assurance conveys much hope and animation to my soul. Morax, thou art a faithful friend—a zealous adherent; my generosity will not be unmindful of thy merit. But ’tis wearing late, and

I need repose to be enabled to appear before the foe with the necessary strength and vigour. To-morrow, ere I depart, I will give thee fuller and more circumstantial instructions concerning the doom of Morima, and other affairs — till then, fare thee well."

The two Moors then separated. Morax retired to his dwelling, deeply impressed with the communications made to him by his master. Despite of the ferocity of his disposition, and his blind usage to follow every inclination of Ismaël, he could not but feel a latent thrill of horror at the proposed slaughter of the innocent Morima. Yet such a necessity he deemed scarcely possible, so fully persuaded was he that the Moors of Seville would return triumphant from the contest. The savage Ismaël, meantime, sought his couch, on which he laid himself with an entire tranquillity of mind ; for, being secure in the only chance which he dreaded, he yielded himself with unbounded confidence to the suggestions of hope, and it was with these pleasing sentiments that the Moor sunk gradually to sleep.

The moment appointed for the combat arrived. The champions mounted their chargers, and, at the signal of trumpets, took the field. Alhamar and his companions were the first within the lists, and they began to parade the ground with a martial deportment. Their foes were not slow in making their appearance. The clattering of horses' hoofs

was heard, and soon burnished shields glancing on the sun were seen reflecting its rays.

“They come,” said Alhamar, in a tone of confident joy. “Now, may the Prophet give strength to my arm, and the traitor shall soon bite the ground.”

The aspect of the Moors of Seville was imposing; they had men chosen with particular care, and all evinced on their countenances the same bold animation, which, added to the great advantage of their number, might strike some feeling of dismay into the hearts of their adversaries. But no such emotions were felt by the daring combatants. Alhamar, the most impatient of all, placed himself opposite to Ismaël, on whom he cast a glance of ferocious satisfaction. Vargas took his station by the side of the King of Granada, and in the centre of his companions. The signal was given, and the infuriate foes joined in formidable conflict—a sullen, confused crush was the earliest evidence of the strife; but this first shock was soon succeeded by a more regular mode of fighting. At first the superiority obtained by numbers, was clearly apparent; the champions of the camp were severally driven back; but this circumstance neither tended to excite their surprise, nor caused their spirits to droop. They knew that they were obliged to fatigue their foes before they could expect to reap any advantage, and to this effect they directed all their endeavours. Al-

hamar and his brother were the only ones who did not observe this prudent order of fighting. Impelled by an ungovernable impetuosity, they had closed in fearful combat with Ismaël and 'Abenhud, a gallant Moor of his party. Alhamar and his hated foe maintained an equal and appalling contest, and they had separated a few paces from the rest, eager that the prey they most desired should not escape.

A groan was heard—it was the death-note of one of the Sevillians, laid low by the redoubtable Vargas. This first advantage served to animate the hopes of that cavalier's companion—the lances were abandoned, and the foes joined in a closer and more terrible combat. Selim was seen at this time hardly pressed by Abenhud and another Moor, who had come up to his support, perceiving from the exhausted state of Don Tello de Osorio, that his efforts were more imperiously demanded where Selim fought; this reinforcement proved fatal to the brave brother of Alhamar. He had to repel the blows of two powerful antagonists, who were eager to prostrate him, in order to join in mass against Vargas, who continued inflicting most fearful punishment on the Sevillians.

Selim, with a desperate effort, aimed so sure a blow against Abenhud, that the warrior trembled on his horse, and then fell to rise no more. Disengaged from one of his foes, he now engaged

boldly with the other, but his means of execution were greatly impaired. His efforts waxed weaker, and after a few moments of resistance, he sunk overpowered with wounds; his victor, however, did not live to enjoy the triumph, for the very next instant he was laid low by the powerful arm of the Master of Santiago, who, having already slain his antagonist, came in time to inflict a similar fate on the conqueror of Selim.

It was now that the combat became terrific; three champions of one party and one of the other, were already stretched lifeless on the field, and most of the remaining combatants had received wounds. The sight of the slain served to inflame more fervently the rage of the foes; they prepared themselves for gigantic exertions; some unearthly spirit seemed to animate them; and the fearful flash of their eyes shooting through the half-closed visors, were like the boding lightning, the herald of the storm. The Sevillians knowing that Vargas was the most redoubtable of their adversaries, resolved to direct their principal efforts against him; accordingly, no less than three stout combatants engaged him in battle. But the powerful Castilian appeared totally unaffected by the repeated and furious blows that flew around his head; with consummate skill, and astonishing rapidity, in the same breath he parried a blow and inflicted one. This arduous task he kept up for a considerable

time, and his enemies, with equal rage and astonishment, saw that their attempts to vanquish the doughty Christian would prove ineffectual.

Meantime the furious contest between Alhamar and Ismaël was continued with undiminished spirit and resolution. Never were seen two antagonists more equally matched. In size, strength, and agility of limb, they might be accounted twins; but their souls partook of very different natures. Alhamar fought with all the consciousness of wrong on his side; and that very sense of wrong threw a degree of sombre gloom over his enemy; the possibility, the mere possibility that the King of Granada might ultimately be joined to his betrothed, filled the ferocious Ismaël with a load of despair and anguish. A thought flashed across his burning brain, that Morax might betray the trust reposed on him; and this image haunted the traitorous Moor with painful tenacity. Throbbing to bring the contest to an issue, he rushed wildly against Alhamar; both foes threw down their arms and began to grapple in a terrific embrace; they strived to hurl each other from their horses, but they were so firmly locked in their sinewy arms, that the task was not one of easy execution.

The champions of the camp had by this time assumed a decided superiority. Six of the Sevillians were lying weltering in their blood, either dead, or pierced with mortal wounds, whilst, of their adversaries, only Selim and Osorio had shared

their fate. Vargas, the Master of Santiago, and Lara, were not only capable of waging terrible combat, but seemed even to fight with strength unimpaired, and undiminished resolution. The Moors now began to tremble for the issue of the enterprise, but the shame of such a defeat stimulated the survivors to unparalleled exertions. Still they fought on, though with decided disadvantage, resolved rather to perish than confess themselves subdued.

By this time, the furious struggle between Alhamar and his enemy was nearly being brought to a termination. They had fallen from their horses, locked in each other's arms; but Alhamar had fortunately the uppermost. Frenzied by the pain of the fall, and inflamed in a thirst for blood, they exerted themselves in a manner that would bespeak them endowed with power superhuman. They lay struggling and rolling on the bloody ground, unable either to rise, or to deal a mortal wound; Alhamar, at this moment, came so close to his brother's corpse, that he actually touched the still warm remains of his dear Selim. This contact seemed powerfully to operate on the King of Granada; with a mighty effort he seized the weapon of his deceased brother, and, before Ismaël had time to provide a suitable defence, the blow of his antagonist had stunned him, and rendered his efforts powerless. Alhamar dragged himself near his detested foe, and threw himself upon him, that

he might crush the wretch with his weight ; his victory was no longer doubtful : he fiercely pressed against the prostrate form of Ismaël, and then, with deliberate aim, inflicted a sure wound, which was the death-warrant of the Sevillian Moor.

“Die, wretch ! Demon ! Perish and rot in detested and unholy ground !” ferociously cried Alhamar, with a voice hoarse with savage exultation, “die, and meet the yet unequal punishment due to thy baseness and ingratitude !”

Ismaël fixed his dying eyes upon his victor, and, while a faint and ghastly smile threw a parting ray of life on his almost inanimate features, in a low, inarticulate tone, he answered —

“Nay, Alhamar, pursue me not with thy hatred beyond the grave ; my offence has met with ample retribution.”

“Alas ! wretch” returned Alhamar, “what boots it thy sorrow and regret now ? Thou canst not heal the rankling wound thou hast inflicted on my happiness.”

“I can,” said Ismaël, faintly ; “Morima is alive — spotless and fair as when first she captivated thy heart.”

“Speak, oh speak, Ismaël !” anxiously cried Alhamar.

“She shall be returned to thee,” answered, still more feebly, the dying Moor. “At this moment I repent me of my injuries to thee. Oh, noble

Alhamar, deny me not thy pardon, ere my soul takes its eternal flight !”

“Mayest thou,” returned the generous Alhamar, moved to pity, “be as freely pardoned on high as the King of Granada forgives thee !”

“’Tis well, I die content !” muttered Ismaël, and a few seconds afterwards he was a stiffened corpse.

The combat was now brought to an end. Four of the Sevillians only were alive, and the death of their chief was the signal to cease from the mortal strife.

“Moors,” cried Alhamar, “my wildest thirst of vengeance is slackened ; my foe is dead ! I feel loath to spill more blood this day ; we are now even in numbers, but not in power ; continue not a contest which must inevitably prove fatal to you, and reserve your valour for other occasions. You have done your duty, and no one can impeach your courage.”

The exhausted Moors readily admitted this proposal, and, with sentiments of deep sorrow and confusion, slowly and dejectedly retraced their steps towards Seville. Deafening clamours of joy and admiration greeted the return of Alhamar and his victorious companions into the camp. The extraordinary feat which they had accomplished, filled the most renowned knights with wonder. At the sound of martial instruments, and attended by the applauding army, the champions were con-

ducted into the tent of King Ferdinand, to receive his congratulations on their glorious achievement. The four combatants bore abundant signs of the the combat, but none appeared in a more bruised and tattered condition than Vargas, whose deeds had been the most astonishing. With his helmet hewn, his shield battered and broken, and his whole appearance in the greatest disorder, the doughty warrior stood before the King; when he suddenly observed that, amongst the cavaliers that surrounded Ferdinand, his foe, the proud and insulting Haro, was the most conspicuous.

Garci Perez cast a glance of scorn on the cour-tier, but spoke not a word; at the same time the King said —

“Noble warriors, my thanks are due for your great feats; in sooth, from this moment, let every one consider Alhamar, Vargas, Lara, and the Master of Santiago, with all the respect and admiration which they deserve, as being the four best knights in my camp.”

“Respect and admiration!” quoth Garci Perez, with a proud smile; “I, for one, my lord King, can scarcely expect so great an honour!”

“What says the good Sir Vargas?” returned the King, in surprise.

“Yes, my liege,” continued the Castilian, with a composed demeanour; “how can I expect respect and admiration from the warriors that compose the ranks of the King of Castile, when there

are those in the camp who even dispute my title to the coat of arms I wear ?”

He paused for a minute ; then assuming a proud and scornful smile, advanced to the place where Haro was standing, and, pointing to his bruised shield, he said, in a bitter tone of irony—

“ Sir, in good sooth we must confess that you shew greater respect for your coat of arms than I do for mine. Your’s is preserved, bright and spotless ; whilst mine, you see, is sorely sullied and disfigured.”*

Haro coloured deeply, for the smarting and just rebuke went far into his heart. The surrounding warriors fixed their looks upon him, and he felt all the pain of which a proud spirit is susceptible, when meeting a castigation against which it can neither afford an excuse, nor assume the rights or the power of retaliation. But a generous impulse soon superseded the anger and confusion of the proud grandee, and, with a noble impulse, he advanced towards Vargas, and, endeavouring to collect the necessary composure, said —

“ Most gallant Garci Perez de Vargas, I have wronged you ; and I wish to atone for my injuries. Yes, I readily confess that Vargas is deserving of bearing the proudest coat of arms in Castile. Allow me to call you my friend ; and let my future respect and regard for you remove the ungentle im-

* Mariana.

pression which my injustice has made on thy generous heart."

"That impression," answered the generous Vargas, "is already removed from the moment that a brother knight is inclined to treat me with those favourable sentiments to which I think myself justly entitled.—My Lord of Haro, I joyfully accept your proffered friendship, and will treat it with a suitable return."

"'Tis well," said the King, glad to see this reconciliation. "Such are the sentiments that ought unanimously to prevail in the camp of Ferdinand. This perfect union existing among all my knights, will be the surest security of the conquest of Seville; the city cannot long hold out against the united power of the numerous and gallant host which I have the pride and honour to command."

The four champions then retired to enjoy the repose which they so much needed, and apply prompt remedies to their bleeding wounds. Alhamar had seen the most fervid wish of his soul accomplished — his vengeance had been abundant — his foes lay slain by his arm, and, to add to the joy of triumph, he entertained the fondest hopes of being soon united to his dear Morima. Thus he saw all the most grateful passions that can inflame an ardent breast likely to be fully gratified. He had punished his foe — the renown of glorious deeds threw a bright halo around his victorious

head — and the bliss of love would soon add its magic charms to the dazzling honour conferred by knightly prowess. Yet, despite of all the pleasing speculations that filled his mind, there was a mournful shadow that cast a partial darkness over his brightest prospects, as he called to mind the bleeding image of Selim on the ensanguined field of strife.

Alhamar had always felt for his brother the tenderest regard; the brilliant qualities of that gallant youth, and the devoted attachment with which he served the King of Granada, had rendered him an object of just appreciation. His loss, therefore, independent of the ties of blood, could not but be a source of sincere regret and affliction.

To bestow on the slain the last funeral rites, was the care that next occupied the attention of both parties. The day subsequent to the combat was set apart for the execution of this melancholy duty. The Moors of Seville sent a troop of warriors accompanied by various other persons, to bring the bodies of Ismaël and his companions into the city. The funeral rites of Selim and Osorio were performed by their brother knights with feelings of deep sorrow, for they were both young and brave, and had given fair promise of becoming two of the most renowned warriors of their day. King Ferdinand then sent an embassy to Seville, to induce the inhabitants to surrender, and promising that should they timely submit, the most easy conditions should attend the surrender of their city.

But the Moors heard this summons with unmingled scorn ; the fate of their champions, instead of damping their courage, inflamed their hearts more intensely, and they resolved to hold out with indefatigable perseverance.

These hostile intentions being made known to Ferdinand, the truce was immediately broken, and the camp and the city assumed their previous attitude.

King Ferdinand alone did stand
One day upon the hill,
Surveying all his leaguers,
And the ramparts of Seville.
The sight was grand, when Ferdinand
By proud Seville was lying,
O'er tower and tree far off to see
The Christian banners flying.
Down chanced the King his eye to fling,
Where far the camp below
Two gentlemen along the glen
Were riding soft and slow ;
As void of fear each cavalier
Seemed to be riding there,
As some strong hound may pace around
The roebuck's thicket lair.
It was Don Garci Perez,
And he would breathe the air,
And he had ta'en a knight with him,
That as lief had been elsewhere ;
For soon this knight to Garci said,
" Ride, ride we, or we 're lost !
I see the glance of helm and lance,
It is the Moorish host."

The stout Knight Garci Perez de Vargas was, indeed, accustomed to ride fearlessly near the walls of the beleaguered city, for he was constantly in search of warlike adventures. On the present occasion he had been joined in his ramble by a cavalier, who, unfortunately, was not blessed with the degree of nerve and boldness which distinguished the renowned Vargas. They soon perceived a party of Moors reconnoitering, and the superiority of their number awed the companion of Garci Perez.

“We must retreat, Sir Knight,” quoth he, “they are seven, and we only two. Let us return to the camp.”

“No, by the rood,” proudly replied Vargas, “were the Moors twenty instead of seven, it should never be said that Garci Perez de Vargas turned his back to the Moor. I will face the foe.”

The Baron of Vargas turn'd him round,
His trusty squire was near,
The helmet on his brow he bound,
His gauntlet grasp'd his spear ;
With that upon his saddle-tree
He planted him right steady :
“Now come,” quoth he, “whoe'er they be,
I trow they 'll find us ready.”
By this the knight who rode with him
Had turn'd his horse's head,
And up the glen in fearful trim
Unto the camp he fled.

“Ha! gone?” quoth Garci Perez;
He smil’d, and said no more,
But slowly with his esquire
Rode as he rode before.

The Moors from forth the greenwood,
Came riding one by one;
A gallant troop with armour,
Resplendent in the sun.

Full haughty was their bearing,
As o’er the sward they came;
While the calm Lord of Vargas,
His march was still the same.

They stood drawn up in order,
While past them all rode he;
For when upon his shield they saw,
The red cross and the tree;

And the wings of the black eagle,
That o’er his crest was spread;
They knew it was Garci Perez,
And ne’er a word they said.

In sooth, the recognition cooled the ardour of the Moors. Garci Perez de Vargas waited their arrival in an attitude of battle; but such was the terror which his name had spread amongst the enemy, that when these Moors recognised the stout Castilian, they declined the combat. Vargas allowed them to pass, and then rode away slowly, but he had scarcely proceeded a few paces, when he exclaimed—

“In sooth, I have dropt my scarf, and I must regain it.”

“Now reach once more thy helmet.”—
The esquire said him nay.
“For a silken string, why should ye fling,
Perchance, your life away?”
“I had it from my Lady,”
Quoth Garci, “long ago ;
And never Moor that scarf, be sure,
In proud Seville shall show.”

Saying this, he turned his horse, and went in the direction of the Moors.

“By my sooth, good sirs,” cried King Ferdinand, amazed, “See ! there, that stout knight’s retracing his steps to provoke the enemy !”

But upon Vargas coming up to the Moors, they declined the combat as before ; the brave Castilian then found the lost scarf, desired his squire to take it up, and having regained it, he rode slowly back into the Christian camp. He was received with feelings approaching to veneration, by his brother warriors.

“Such an event is almost incredible,” said the King ; “and more than anything, bespeaks the prowess and renown of the good knight Garci Perez. And now tell me, brave Castilian, who was thy companion ; a shame on the craven ! to abandon thus a gallant warrior. His name should be known.”

“Pardon, my Liege,” nobly answered Vargas, “it is no policy to heap shame on a cavalier of gentle birth ; rather let him preserve the consciousness of honour unstained, and he will amend.

Such a disclosure would be unmanly, and besides unproductive of good. Take away the sense of honour from a gentleman, and for what will he care afterwards?"

"Yet his dastard conduct deserves ——"

"My Lord King," interrupted Vargas, in a decided tone, "it is needless to urge me, for I shall never disclose the name of the cavalier."

He was afterwards solicited by his friends to the same effect; but with the same want of success. This noble conduct of Vargas greatly enhanced the glory of his feat, and endeared him still more to his brothers in arms.* No one felt more duly gratified at the successes and glory of Garci Perez, than his friend Alhamar; the loss of this King's brother seemed to have rendered his Castilian companion more dear, and his company more necessary.

"Ah! Vargas," he said to the Castilian, "I feel a strange excitement, that nothing can assuage."

"The loss of thy noble brother is a sore calamity; yet, let not that circumstance weigh down the stout heart of Alhamar."

"No, my friend; deep as my affliction is for the death of Selim, I know how to bear misfortune with manliness; besides, the end of my brother was so glorious, that the consideration must afford some alleviation to my sorrow; but a strange, undefinable feeling swells my heart; 'tis a mixture

* The whole of this adventure is detailed by Mariana.

of hope, joy, and dread, and it leaves me not a moment of repose."

That moment a message came from King Ferdinand, expressing a wish to see Alhamar on affairs of urgency.

"King of Granada," said Ferdinand, as that sovereign made his appearance, "a herald has come from Seville, saying that he wishes to see you. I am not so base as to suppose you capable of meditating any betrayal. But have ye, in sooth, anything to expect from the besieged city."

"King of Castile," returned Alhamar, somewhat confused; "yes, I confess that I should not be loth to see the messenger."

Hereupon Alhamar, in a few words, gave his brother king an account of his sorrows, and of the fate of Morima, which deeply interested Ferdinand.

"My dying foe," continued Alhamar, "expressed much contrition for his wrongs towards me, and, as an atonement, gave me his word that Morima should be returned to my embrace: perchance the message from Seville hath some reference to this circumstance. With your kind sanction I would see the herald."

The messenger was immediately introduced to the King of Granada.

"Noble Alhamar," he said, in a respectful tone of voice, "the termination of thy affliction is nigh; give, therefore, free scope to the most rapturous suggestions of hope."

“Moor, what wouldst thou with me?” gravely interrupted Alhamar, “unfold thy purpose speedily, and waste no time in idle words.”

“Knowest thou this crimson scarf?” said the messenger, with a placid smile showing the token.

“Merciful Prophet!” exclaimed Alhamar, with a thrill of joy and surprise, “yes, ’tis the very same gage — the dear gage of her love — the gage that she was preparing for me when the ——;” he checked himself and added — “when the dead Ismaël — Oh! give me quick that precious token, and the blessings of heaven fall upon thy head.”

“Take it,” said the Moor, “take it, for it is the forerunner of far greater bliss — ’tis the last dying injunctions of Ismaël that we obey; that chief did you injury, and was anxious to repair it; more unholy thoughts had at a time filled his soul, but fortunately they were discarded. This very night thou shalt see and be united with thy Morima.”

A tumult of delight inundated the throbbing heart of Alhamar at such welcome tidings. He gazed earnestly at the propitious informant, and expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms.

“You owe me nought,” returned the Moor, in the same placid tone, “for I do but fulfil the commands of my dead master and benefactor. This very night approach the gates of Seville, and thy beloved Morima shall be delivered into thy arms.”

“This night? — I will not fail.”

“Till then farewell, and may the Prophet guide thee!”

The Moor said, and then retraced his steps to Seville.

Alhamar related to King Ferdinand what had taken place, and at the same time testified the most lively joy at so fortunate an occurrence; but the Castilian Sovereign with great caution counselled him not to place too much confidence in the Moor. Despite of the aspect of sincerity which the affair wore, it was yet possible, nay probable, that the whole transaction might be a stratagem contrived by the friends of the deceased to entrap the unsuspecting Alhamar, and bestow on him by treachery that doom which they had not been able to inflict in the field of battle. Acting upon this impression, Ferdinand advised his ally to be attended in his expedition by a competent party, in order to check any treason, if such a thing was in contemplation. This prudent measure could not be objected to by Alhamar, and he accordingly expressed his acknowledgments to Ferdinand, and promised faithfully to adhere to his good counsel.

When night came, the King of Granada took his departure from the camp, accompanied by his friend Vargas and a troop of horsemen, sufficient successfully to withstand any attack. Slowly and cautiously the party approached the walls of the city, carefully investigating in their way, if there was not some treachery lying in ambush; they

reached Seville, however, without danger of any kind, and the apprehensions of Alhamar and his companions began to vanish.

“I see no one on the battlements,” quoth Vargas. “Do the false Moors mean to play with our credulity?”

“I think we are before our time,” answered Alhamar. “But several figures are now perceptible on the walls. Let us advance.”

They did so ; the gates of Seville were cautiously opened, and two or three men carrying a burthen were seen to issue from the city ; the darkness prevented the party from ascertaining either their character, or the burthen they bore, which, however, they carefully deposited on the ground, and then retired hastily into the city, the gates of which were closed forthwith.

“What mystery is this?” quoth Alhamar.

“Let us investigate what may be yonder bulk,” said Garci Perez. “Perchance it is what we seek.”

“Nay, Sir Castilian,” answered Alhamar, displeased. “Surely the wretches would pay more respect to a noble Moorish maiden, than to bring her to her betrothed like a bale of goods.”

A voice on the battlements now called their attention.

“Approach, oh ! Alhamar—thy wishes are accomplished.”

The King of Granada and Vargas did so ; upon

a nearer approach they perceived that the burden which the Moors had laid down did not move ; they hastened to learn what it was — they beheld a coffin ! Horror-struck and with fearful misgivings, Alhamar caused the lid to be removed, a torch was brought near, they found in the fatal receptacle a young female lately murdered, still warm in blood. It was Morima ! Alhamar uttered a shrill cry of despair and leant on Vargas for support. The consternation and horror of the party were expressed in a freezing and mournful silence. Vargas saw a paper within the coffin ; he took it in his hands and read the following words :—

“ False Alhamar, traitor to thy faith and country, behold the object which Ismaël hath prepared to greet thy anxious eye ! Behold ! that he fulfils the promise he made thee of delivering Morima into thy hands. Let a cankering despair rend thy heart when thou seest all thy hopes baffled, and let the consciousness of thy becoming a renegade add its scorpion-stings to the other pangs that must lacerate thy perfidious soul.”

It was long before Alhamar could apply the powers of his mind to form any resolution. The shock which the sight of his beloved Morima cruelly butchered, together with the horrid circumstances attendant on her dismal fate, caused in

the unfortunate King of Granada, was so intense, absorbing, and terrific, that not even the burning throbbings of revenge could awake him from his unnatural torpor. But at length he started from that chilling lethargy, and his awaking was marked by the wildest ebullitions of rage and vengeance. Nothing seemed competent to assuage his feverish frenzy; the complete destruction of Seville could scarcely suffice to appease his fury. There was something so wild, so incoherent in his words and manners, that his friends began to be alarmed lest the frightful doom of his beloved should have asserted some fatal influence over his reason. In vain Garci Perez resorted to every means of affording consolation; his soothing attentions were lost on the afflicted Alhamar, and he repulsed with fierce resolution every attempt either to assuage the sting of sorrow, or calm the fever of passion.

Some time after this the safety of Seville was greatly diminished by the burning of the bridge of boats, which mainly contributed to the defence of the city, as by its medium the besieged were enabled to bring into the place all the necessaries of life. To poison the river had also been one of the schemes of the enraged King; but the idea was as unfeasible as it was extravagant. Ramor Boniface, who commanded the navy of the King of Castile, approved the plan of destroying the bridge, and added to their first suggestion, that of burning the

enemy's ships in the Guadalquiver. Large pots of pitch, and other combustibles, were therefore collected, and everything was made ready for the storming of the bridge and ships.

At length a dark night and a strong wind arrived to second the intentions of the Christians; three or four sturdy barks, impelled by the furious gale, broke through the slender boats that composed the bridge, and soon after the Sevillian ships were seen involved in an ocean of flame. The wind spread wide the burning ruin, and the alarm of the besieged was wrought to the highest degree. The communication being thus cut between the suburbs and the city, and the means of transporting provisions rendered impossible, Seville was at length compelled to surrender, after a long and gallant siege of eighteen months.

This glorious event for the Christian arms, took place in the year 1248; Ferdinand entered the city in triumph; Seville soon changed its aspect; the Christian banners and the crosses filled the towers and mosques; Xaraf, and a great number of the Moors, withdrew into Africa, and his palace was soon occupied by the King of Castile, who from that moment began to entertain the idea of making the conquered city the metropolis of his now vast dominions. The vengeance of Alhamar had been sated, and now a very different sensation filled his breast; a feeling of sorrow and remorse embittered every moment of his life; he saw those

of his own religion vanquished, miserable, and exiled. Such a fate might at some future time befall his own kingdom of Granada ; he had lent his assistance for the furtherance of the Christian power, and by this means acted both unjustly to his brethren and imprudently for his own interest.

To these gloomy reflections were added others of an equally distressing tendency. Morima was murdered ; his brother Selim had fallen on his account ; and in fine, he had brought a heavy load of varied woe upon himself. Baffled by these conflicting passions, the wretched Alhamar took his leave of the Christian king, and retraced his steps to Granada, full of despondency and regret. There he strove both to alleviate his sorrow, and atone for the past errors of his passion, by endeavouring to ameliorate the lot of his subjects.

After the conquest of Seville, Ferdinand pursuing his career of triumph and glory, took the city of Xerez and other places, and was even entertaining the daring thought of carrying war into Africa, when death came to prevent his intentions. The king died at Seville, in May 1252. Few monarchs are more justly entitled to the respect and admiration of posterity, than Ferdinand the Third, of Castile. He was prudent and brave, patient and magnanimous ; the beauty of his person was in strict accordance with the activity and other qualities of his mind. To his many virtues he added

a sincere piety and love of religion. His conquests were as splendid as they were useful to Spain ; and, altogether, his name is one of those which is pronounced with veneration by the children of the Peninsula.

Ferdinand was canonized by Clement the Tenth, in the year 1671 ; and his mortal remains are yet to be seen, encased in a crystal shrine, in the Cathedral of Seville.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Reigns of Alonzo the Tenth, surnamed the Wise,
and Sancho the Fourth, called the Brave.

A PERIOD OF 43 YEARS.

A. D. 1252. ALONZO was crowned at Seville. Alhamar, the Moorish King of Granada, renewed the terms of friendship in which he had lived with his predecessor King Ferdinand.

1255. Edward the Third of England married the heroic Eleanor, sister of Alonzo.

1256. Alonzo was called to the throne of Germany, but as he was preparing to set out for Francfort, a commotion which disturbed his own kingdom prevented him from pursuing his journey, and meantime his competitor was crowned ; the discontents augmented in Castile on account of the impoverished state of the royal coffers, and the imprudent measures which the King adopted to fill them.

1257. Alonzo subjected, partly by force, partly by other means, the province of Algarve.

1273. Aben-Jucef invaded the territory of Seville, while Mohammed attacked that of Cordova ; the Christians were thrown into great commotion, a battle was fought disastrous to the latter, and Don Nunio de Lara was slain, and his head struck off.

1276. This year began the unfortunate quarrel between the king and his son, the Infant Don Sancho, whom a strong party wished to be declared heir to the throne.

1277. Alonzo laid siege to Algeciras, but was repulsed by Aben-Jucef.

1278. Alonzo summoned the cortes at Toledo. He disin-

herited Sancho, but the prince was elected king by a powerful party ; the agony of the old king at the rebellion of his son was very great. It is said, however, that a reconciliation took place before Alonzo's death, which happened in 1284. Alonzo the Wise, despite of his faults and imprudent acts, was a great king. His learning and love of letters were conspicuous in an age in which science might be said to be yet in its infancy. Alonzo was besides a great lover of justice, and a gallant knight in the field of battle. Edward the First thought it an honour to be knighted by him. The Castilian language is greatly indebted to Don Alonzo, whose chronicles and the laws of the *siete Partidas* remain to this day a splendid monument of his taste and erudition.

1284. Upon the death of Alonzo, his son Sancho the Brave was unanimously proclaimed King of Castile ; the machination of the Infant Don Juan produced no effect further than disturbing the public tranquillity.

1286. Don Juan passed over into Africa, and requested the aid of Aben-Jacob to carry on his cabals against the kingdom of Castile. Aben-Jacob sent him with five thousand men to lay siege to Tarifa ; this important place was defended by the celebrated Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman, surnamed the Good. Aben-Jacob continued the siege. A son of Guzman was in the power of Don Juan, and this perverse man threatened to sacrifice the son, unless the father surrendered. Guzman threw his sword into the Moorish camp that they might accomplish the horrid deed ; the enraged enemy cut off the head of the youth ; but the inflexible father maintained his trust ; the siege of Tarifa was shortly after abandoned.

1295. This year Don Sancho the Brave died, after having achieved some victories over the Moors. He was prudent and a great warrior ; some historians however tax him with cruelty. He did not, however, show sufficient severity towards his turbulent and factious brother, Don Juan, who involved the nation in such continual disturbance.

Guzman the Good.

See the fond mother, 'midst the plaintive train,
Hung on his knees, and prostrate on the plain ;
Touched to the soul, in vain he strives to hide
The sire's affection, in the Roman's pride !

COLLINS.

Guzman the Good.

ABEN-JACOB, the Moorish King of Fez and Marruecos, had determined to lay siege to Tarifa, the possession of which was of the greatest advantage to the Moslem, as it formed an entrance to Spain from the Mediterranean. He accordingly made mighty preparations to accomplish his design. His cousin, Amir, was first sent with a competent body of men, and he himself resolved to follow shortly after, carrying with him every thing necessary to prosecute a vigorous siege.

Don Sancho, King of Castile, could not behold the hostile intentions of Aben-Jacob without some feelings of apprehension. Though one of the bravest princes that swayed the sceptre, yet the impoverished state, and distracted situation of his kingdom, rendered him incapable of attending to the defence of the important point of Tarifa. In this emergency a nobleman presented himself to the King, and generously offered to help his sovereign in his difficulty. He promised to collect the men and supply the money necessary for conducting the undertaking himself. The King, pressed

on every side, gratefully accepted the offer of this heroic subject, and his mind was relieved from a heavy burthen.

The brave man, who had exhibited such noble sentiments, was Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman, called in history *el Bueno*, or the Good. He had already rendered signal services to the King of Castile, for it was he that had conquered Tarifa from the Moors, after a stubborn and laborious siege. His name was celebrated in Spain and Africa, for his extraordinary courage and the noble qualities of his mind. Indeed, among the epithets with which men generally distinguish a fellow creature who has been conspicuous for his merit, Guzman might have laid just claim to the most brilliant. The great, the brave, the noble, or the powerful, would have naturally attached to his name, but, as if it was requisite better to distinguish him, the title of *el Bueno*, or the Good, was bestowed upon him: a title the most appropriate, as it served to imply every kind of excellence.

Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman speedily repaired to Tarifa, taking with him all his family, friends, and adherents. He caused the walls to be put in a state of proper defence, and made every arrangement conducive to the successful defence of a siege, which he anticipated would be as obstinate as the hatred of Aben-Jacob was rancorous towards himself. Guzman had previously lived in

Africa, in terms of strict friendship with Aben-Jucef, the father of Aben-Jacob, from which circumstance a rancorous jealousy had been excited in the heart of the latter—a heart as paltry and malignant as that of his sire had been noble and magnanimous. Feelings of private revenge being thus united to interest of national import, Guzman easily foresaw that the task which he had taken upon himself was one of difficulty; but that great man had a soul which disdained the softest whisperings of fear; and the critical nature of his position awakened in his mind no other thoughts but such as were conducive to the successful fulfilment of his undertaking.

There was in the camp of the Moors a brother of the King of Castile, so perverse that he did not scruple to wage war against his lawful sovereign, his brother, on the side of the enemies of his country and religion. This unprincipled man was the Infant Don Juan, one of the most profligate and detestable princes whose names have stained the page of Spanish history. Of his vices it is difficult to decide which was the most predominant; that indeed assumed the mastery which was most immediately conducive to the indulgence of the moment. He had been a continual agitator, a fire-brand of discord, a restless genius of evil, whom neither generous pardon could conciliate, nor threatened punishment turn from his wicked career. His life had already been spared, and the

King had even been so lavish in his generosity as to liberate him from that prison in which, both for the public peace and as the punishment of his guilt, he ought to have finished his days. The return which Don Juan made to his indulgent brother upon his liberation from confinement was, hastening to Africa and offering his services to Aben-Jacob. The Moorish chief most readily accepted the offer, for he knew that Don Juan would be of most essential use to him, both by his daring courage and the deep scheming of his turbulent disposition ; besides, he feared nothing from his unprincipled character, as he would not stand upon so much ceremony with him as the King of Castile—having resolved at the very first offence to sever his head from his body.

Aben-Jacob being a cruel and wicked man himself, found the temper and disposition of the Castilian prince in perfect accordance with his own. A friendship as deep and sincere as can possibly be cemented in the breasts of two unprincipled beings, was soon engendered in theirs ; and another circumstance strengthened their sentiments of mutual regard. Aben-Jacob had a sister, the young Zora, a maiden of extraordinary beauty. Nature had been most prodigal in her favours to this lovely being. The soft liquid eye mirrored the gentleness of her mind ; the seraph smile that graced her lip betokened the kindness of her heart. She was adorned with every feminine attraction,

and if anything could exceed the beauty of her person, it was the loveliness of her soul.

Don Juan no sooner beheld this bewitching object, than he was powerfully struck with her charms : a violent, a stormy passion, such as could only be excited in his tumultuous heart, was soon enkindled, and it raged with resistless power. From the moment he saw her, he determined to possess that paradise of charms ; but as he could not flatter himself to be able to accomplish his purpose by force or deception, he demanded her hand as the reward he was to receive for all the services he might afford to Aben-Jacob. The Moor acceded to his proposal, not knowing that amongst the accomplishments of the Castilian prince was that of contracting marriage bonds with the same facility as he broke them whenever it suited his inclination or interest.

Zora, however, shrunk with disgust from a union with Don Juan. His character was odious to her ; nor were there in his person any attractions to soften the ill-impression which his detested temper was calculated to produce. But besides the reasons afforded by the suitor himself to impede the success of his desires, there were other obstacles which it would have been difficult to surmount, had Don Juan been even endowed with as many virtues as he was unfortunately deformed with vices. Zora had already felt the influence of a tender passion, and the object that had inspired it

was as deserving of her love, as her present admirer was of her hatred and contempt. The young Don Pedro de Guzman inherited both the prepossessing appearance and noble qualities of his heroic father, Don Alonzo. The habits of friendship and confidence in which the elder Guzman lived with Aben-Jucef whilst residing in Africa, had facilitated many interviews between their children, and these had led to the formation of a tender and devoted affection. Mutual vows of constancy were pledged, and when Don Pedro was obliged to depart for Spain, he took his leave of Zora with perfect confidence in her faith, and with fond hopes of future happiness. Such was the state of the Moorish maiden's heart when Don Juan came, not to dislodge the unalterable feelings of that heart, but to fill it with sorrow and dismay.

Aben-Jacob now repaired to prosecute the siege of Tarifa, begun by his cousin Amir. Don Juan, with a slender party of renegade Christians, accompanied the Moor, who compelled his sister to attend him to the camp as a means of precaution. He had perceived the abhorrence and disdain with which Zora had treated the attentions of her admirer, and he knew besides that young Guzman was in a great measure the cause of those inimical sentiments. Aben-Jacob, therefore, conceived that Zora was a most powerful engine in his hands, both as a security for the unwearied exertions and services of Don Juan, and as the means of devising

some future schemes against Tarifa by playing upon the affections of Don Pedro de Guzman. The presence of his sister in the camp he considered a stroke of profound policy, and she was accordingly compelled to follow the sordid Moor before the walls of the besieged town.

The place was attacked with fierce animation, but without effect. In a sally which the Castilians made, the Moors were routed with considerable loss. Aben-Jacob next endeavoured to corrupt the integrity of Guzman the Good; and with this view he sent a private messenger to the Christian chief, offering him a munificent reward if he would surrender the town. The proposition was received by the Governor with all the indignation that might have been expected from his character. The siege continued; but the Moor, perceiving the little success of his undertaking, and despairing of bringing it to a future issue, made a different proposal to Guzman, which was, that upon the delivery of a certain sum of money, he would immediately raise the siege. This alternative the Spaniard treated with the same contempt as the former, and it was upon this occasion that he returned the answer—" *Good Knights neither buy nor sell the victory.*"

Aben-Jacob, enraged at the failure of all his schemes, and yet ashamed to raise the siege which he had begun with such arrogance, applied the whole powers of his subtle soul to a very different

expedient. He pretended that the siege could not be prosecuted for the present, and making a great show of his wishes to enter into some amicable arrangement, assumed the expression of a disposition which was in direct contradiction with his character and actual ideas. He ordered his sister Zora to be brought into his presence, and affecting great mildness of tone and courtesy of manner, he began to address the maiden —

“Dear Zora,” he said, “I am now sensible of my error in laying siege to Tarifa, when defended by such a man as Guzman. His integrity is equal to his bravery ; but his goodness of heart is superior to both. I am most willing to renew the bonds of friendship which existed between our late father and the noble Castilian, and for this an amicable termination of our difference is indispensable. I am sensible of thy affection for young Guzman ; and I also know that he fully returns that tender feeling. On the other hand, my eyes have been opened to the villanies and depraved character of Don Juan, thy present suitor. Yet I am at present so delicately situated, that I must not openly exasperate him. Thou hast, however, my decided approbation to repel his addresses, and to favour those of Don Pedro de Guzman. To this young warrior thou must send a letter immediately, inviting him to a clandestine meeting to-night, in which thou must exert thy influence over his heart to persuade him to use his best endeavours with

his father towards an adjustment of this contest. In the letter thou art to write to thy lover, do not forget to mention the importunities of Don Juan, and thy dread and abhorrence of his character."

This insidious speech was received by the unsuspecting Zora with feelings of the most unmixed delight. There was such an appearance of sincerity in her brother's words and manner, and besides, what was required of her bore so reasonable an aspect, that she could not for a single moment harbour a suspicion of Aben-Jacob's treacherous intentions. She willingly promised, therefore, to comply with his request, and wrote an affectionate letter to Don Pedro, earnestly inviting him to a secret interview on the approaching night. In this letter she failed not to depict the trials she had undergone, and was even now exposed to, from the odious suit of Don Juan; and made use of all that female eloquence, which is so powerful in deciding the actions of men, when slaves to the absorbing passion of love.

This letter was sent by an old Moor, who, at the same time, carried a message to Guzman. Aben-Jacob confided implicitly in the sagacity of this man, and he hailed as certain the accomplishment of his plans. With regard to Don Juan, he was made acquainted with all the circumstances by the Moor; nay, it was he who had the principal share in maturing the treacherous plot, as he longed to get his successful rival, Don Pedro, into his

power. Their hopes succeeded to the widest extent ; the letter was received by Don Pedro, and produced upon him the desired effect. The young enamoured cavalier was filled with rapturous delight at the perusal of Zora's vows of love and constancy, but at the same time the persecutions to which she was exposed from the wicked Don Juan filled him with alarm. He knew that the character of that prince was capable of the last degree of depravity, and he trembled for the safety of his beloved Zora. His resolution was soon made ; the offered meeting presented too many attractions to be refused. Now and then some misgivings rose in the generous youth's heart, concerning the propriety of his visiting clandestinely the enemy's camp ; nor was he completely satisfied that his conduct was irreproachable, in thus taking any step without the knowledge and sanction of his father. But love, all powerful love, soon silenced these scruples, and Don Pedro prepared to leave Tarifa in the night.

The wished-for moment arrived, and young Guzman, accompanied by the wily Moor who had brought the letter, left the town with the utmost secrecy and precaution. After some perilous adventures, he arrived in the enemy's camp, and was introduced to a tent, where, with feelings of unbounded rapture, he met Zora waiting for him alone. The Moor-guide then retired, and the two lovers were allowed undisturbed conversation.

“Oh, my Zora!” said the enamoured Guzman, “could I expect so much felicity? Thy love, indeed, is great and sincere—great as thy angelic beauty, sincere as the goodness of thy soul. The boldness of this meeting is the strongest proof of thy affection.”

“My own Guzman,” she said, in a loving voice, “many have been the trials I have sustained, many the hardships I have endured, since the sad moment of our separation. I even apprehended we should never meet again; but propitious Heaven has ordained otherwise, and this meeting is only the prelude to greater happiness.”

“Thy confidence, Zora,” answered Don Pedro, in surprise, “is to me most gratifying; yet the delight it affords is scarcely greater than the astonishment. Why speak thus, when subject to so many dangers and persecutions? Even now perils surround us, and should we unfortunately be surprised——”

“Banish such fears from thy mind,” interrupted Zora, smiling sweetly; “the danger which you apprehend does not exist.”

“What say you, Zora?”

“The truth—we are in perfect security.”

“Yet, thy brother!—Don Juan!”

“My brother knows that you are here.”

“Just Heavens!—Can this be possible?”

“’Tis by his own desire that I wrote that letter. He hates Don Juan now as deeply as we do; but

considerations of policy oblige him to affect a show of friendship which is very distant from his heart. Nay, Aben-Jacob approves our affection, and is willing to give it his sanction. He is most anxious that this contest should be brought to a friendly termination, and——”

“Hold, my Zora,” cried young Guzman, mournfully, “my heart misgives me strangely. Some deep plot has been contrived by thy scheming brother.”

“A plot! no, no,” eagerly replied Zora; “it cannot be. Sincerity was stamped in his every word and action. Besides, what plot can there exist?”

“He no doubt intends to gain possession of Tarifa, by means of our attachment. Alas! he deceives himself completely if he suppose that any private interest can induce my noble father to act in prejudice of his duty: the love of his son for a Moorish maiden, will never persuade him to surrender the town; nay, were my great sire capable of the weakness, I myself would be the first to dissuade him from an act so detrimental to the splendour and glory which belong to his name.”

“You mistake, O Guzman!” interposed his mistress; “you really mistake my brother’s views. He does not want to corrupt the integrity of the father by bribing the affections of his son. No, no, I believe he has renounced every idea of becoming master of Tarifa, and is only anxious to renew

those habits of amity and good-will which existed between our respected fathers."

This asseveration did not smooth away the doubt of young Guzman. He had fondly indulged the belief that his coming into the Moorish camp was the effect of a romantic passion, not any resource of policy. He came with the deepest conviction that no one was aware of this clandestine meeting, which, to his fervid imagination, had appeared arrayed in all the charms of adventure. Soon therefore as the romance was removed, his doubts were awakened, for the conversion of Aben-Jacob appeared to him too suddenly effected, and too little supported by reason, to be lasting and sincere.

Zora read in her lover's looks the painful thoughts which occupied his mind ; she endeavoured to calm his apprehensions, but her affectionate endeavours proved in vain : a fearful presentiment of evil had taken possession of his heart, and a sad smile of incredulous import was the answer which the fond girl received to her warm protestations and soothing manner.

"But tell me, my own Guzman," she said, endearingly, "what danger do you apprehend? Do you really conceive that Aben-Jacob premeditates some treason?"

"Alas!" he answered, "my mind is so confused with crowding thoughts, that I cannot form any reasonable surmise. The idea of danger is vividly engraven on my imagination — my heart whispers

that some evil is at hand, but what the precise nature of that calamity may be I cannot imagine."

At this moment a noise of approaching footsteps was heard; Don Pedro started in surprise, and believed that his apprehensions were about to be realized. Soon after, two persons entered the tent: these persons were Aben-Jacob and Don Juan.

"Merciful Heavens!" exclaimed Don Pedro, in sorrow, "then my worst fears are confirmed! Oh, Zora, Zora! into what an abyss of danger and misery has thy imprudent confidence precipitated thy loving friend!"

"Most amorous sir," quoth Aben-Jacob, with a savage grin, "so you have fallen into my power! Poor wittol! deluded youth! That love should thus turn the common reason of man, is to me surprising!"

"What mean you, brother?" demanded Zora in alarm; "surely you cherish no hostile feelings towards the unoffending Castilian?"

"Unoffending Castilian!" exclaimed the Moor, with a laugh of derision; "by Allah, such words are most amusing! Here I find an enemy within my camp, in clandestine intercourse with mine own sister — yet the youth is unoffending, forsooth!"

With a look of horror and dismay Zora fixed her eyes upon her treacherous brother, unable to express her astonishment by words. Young Guzman preserved a proud composure: the foul treason was now fully unfolded to him, but he disdained to

show any signs of fear or alarm. He had been guilty of an imprudent act, and he resolved to undergo the award which it deserved with a courage worthy of his sire. Don Juan cast a malignant glance on the youth, and enjoyed all the pleasure of which a treacherous nature is capable.

"I see I am the victim of a dark plot," said Don Pedro, resolutely, and looking haughtily on his enemies.

"No," replied Aben-Jacob scornfully, "thou art the victim of thy own folly."

"I demand," said Guzman firmly, "to be allowed to return to Tarifa in perfect safety, or you may rue the day when you thought by vile contrivances to deceive the sincerity of an honourable Castilian."

"An honourable Castilian!" cried Don Juan in derision. "Forsooth! the term is well applied to a man who comes in the darkness of night, like a prowling thief, to seduce the faith of a foolish maiden—a woman too who is destined to become the bride of another."

"False man! vile renegade! Castilian unworthy of the name!" exclaimed young Guzman in violent agitation. "Darest thou even pronounce the word honourable, sunk, degraded as thou art? Can aught in nature wear a more loathsome aspect than the Infant Don Juan: that traitor to his country and religion, that supreme of all that is vicious, darksome, and repugnant! Shame! that an infatuation of love should have reduced me to en-

dure a vision that fills me with horror and disgust. Ay, to come into the presence of a man whom I should wish nowhere to see but hand to hand in the field of battle !”

“Speak on, miserable boy—drivelling fool, speak on,” returned Don Juan, with coolness ; “vent all the spite and choler that oppresses thy deluded heart: ay, vent it freely, else thou mayest be smothered ere the time of retribution arrives !”

“Oh! my brother,” cried Zora, in the most lively affliction, “you mean not to act treacherously by Don Pedro: from the false Don Juan nothing can be expected but that which is base and criminal; but you, my brother, cannot wish to rival that monster in wickedness. ’Twas by your own desire that the unfortunate letter which has brought that Castilian into this dilemma was written and sent. I obeyed your instructions, and now ——”

“And now,” interrupted Aben-Jacob, with ferocious exultation, “now that I have reaped the fruit of my sagacious head and thy foolish credulity; now that my enemy is secure, and the proud Don Alonzo de Guzman compelled to lower his arrogance; now that I have a precious hostage, and that thou art no longer of any use in this transaction; retire to thy women, and be prepared to become the bride of Don Juan the moment it may please me to give the word: and thou, Christian,” he added, turning to Guzman, “surrender thy arms, for thou art my prisoner.”

He stamped with his foot, and the tent was instantly filled with soldiers ; the unfortunate Don Pedro perceived the madness of attempting a defence, and with feelings of horror and indignation was compelled to surrender.

Zora endeavoured to move the hard heart of her brother by her tears and supplications ; but that tender appeal, instead of soothing the savage Moor, tended only to confirm him more strongly in his intentions. The unfortunate Don Pedro was immediately secured and loaded with chains. At the sight of this indignity offered to him, a tear of mingled shame and resentment started to his eye.

“ Base Moor !” he exclaimed, “ ’tis not enough that I am become thy victim, but thou must needs add this aggravating insult to my misfortune ! I am bound — secured with odious irons like a detested criminal — some dangerous felon. If thou hast the least remnant of human feeling in thy heart, spare me — oh ! spare me this last humiliation.”

But this application to the Moor’s heart was equally unsuccessful with that made by Zora. The wretched maid, considering herself the cause of the heavy disaster that had befallen her lover, was thrown into a paroxysm of grief and despair. She cast a lingering, melancholy look on the victim of her love as she was torn from him, and a horrid presentiment came over her soul that they were separated for ever. Aben-Jacob and Don Juan

congratulated themselves on the success of their hellish machination, and now held a consultation on the most efficient method of making this first success conducive to their ultimate designs.

Thus passed that night. Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman, little aware of the misfortune of his son, and the severe trial to which his paternal feelings were about to be subjected, rose in the morning, and began in his wonted manner carefully to inspect the town, and see if everything was in a proper state. The sounds of a trumpet soon startled his ear, and a new parley from the Moors was announced.

“This obstinacy on the part of the enemy,” he muttered with some impatience, “is as singular as it is fruitless ; they know full well that all attempts to make me deviate from the stern path of duty is unavailing : however,” he added, turning to one of his men, “Alvarez, bring the messengers into my presence, I will not deny them courtesy, however inflexible I may prove in other respects.”

The delegates from the Moorish camp were introduced ; and their arrogant demeanour and insolent looks caused amaze to the Christians, who had been accustomed to very different behaviour from their enemies in all their previous embassies. They awaited in suspense what could be the object of the present mission, announced as it was with such confidence.

“Guzman,” said abruptly one of the messengers,

“in the name of the sacred Prophet, his lieutenant, the mighty and magnificent Aben-Jacob, sends us again in a spirit of generosity to invite thee to surrender this town and fortress of Tarifa. Bear well in mind that a non-compliance with this demand shall be attended with mournful results to the Christians, and especially to thee.”

“Moor,” replied Guzman, with dignified composure, “my sentiments ought by this time to be so well known to thy countrymen as to be in need of no further illustration. While I draw breath, Tarifa shall not become the property of the Moors. This decision I have repeatedly signified to Aben-Jacob, and now I declare it for the last time. Let him know, therefore, that henceforward he may spare himself the trouble of sending embassies.”

“That high tone,” returned the Moor vauntingly, “will soon be reduced to a more conciliatory level, when thou knowest the power of Aben-Jacob to work thy ruin.”

“Hold, infidel!” cried Guzman proudly, “thou couldst not adopt a more fruitless plan than attempting to bow Alonzo Perez de Guzman by threats. Whatever the power of Aben-Jacob may be, however boundless his resources, however terrible his means of inflicting misery, they can never be sufficient to work the downfall of my honour—and that, in sooth, is the only ruin that I should dread.”

“There is another peril, proud Spaniard,” said

the messenger, "which will make thee tremble, if thou hast indeed the attributes of a man. Thou art a father, Guzman, and haughty and unbending as thy soul may be, still the powerful cries of nature cannot be totally disregarded when they make an appeal to thy heart."

He stopped; Guzman and his companions were puzzled at the mysterious words of the Moor: they suffered him to proceed.

"The danger of thy son Don Pedro must needs awake thy paternal solicitude."

"My son Don Pedro! what meanest thou, Moor?" cried Guzman, in some confusion and alarm; "surely he has not turned traitor to his country and religion? But," he added, turning to the Castilians, "where is my son—why is he not present here?"

No one could answer the question, and the apprehensions of the Christians acquired additional power.

"Thy son," resumed the Moor, with exultation, "is now a prisoner in our camp, in which, last night, he was surprised on a romantic adventure. He is a valuable hostage, and Aben-Jacob means to turn this fortunate event to the best advantage. The freedom of thy son can only be obtained by the surrender of Tarifa."

"Then," replied Guzman, with stern composure, "my son must remain in bondage all his life."

"Hold, Guzman," proceeded the Moor, "thou

knowest not the full extent of the danger to which the boy is exposed. His life is threatened; for learn, haughty Castilian, that unless this town be surrendered in twelve hours, the head of young Guzman must be severed from its trunk."

"Then," cried Don Nuño Garcia, one of the Castilians, fiercely, "it is high time we secure your persons, that your lives may answer for any danger that may threaten Don Pedro!"

As he said this, the Noble and other attendants were about to secure the messengers, when Guzman interposed—

"Stay, Castilians!" he said, "what does a mistaken zeal prompt ye to do? These men, however unworthy, bear the characters of ambassadors, and as such we must respect them. Let it never be said, that Alonzo Perez de Guzman followed up the treacherous conduct which marked the proceedings of his enemies. Depart, Moors, and tell your master that threats and promises are of equal inefficiency with the governor of Tarifa. Barbarous as he is, I do him the justice to suppose him incapable of such an atrocious and treacherous deed, as the murder of an unoffending boy. But, should so dark a design really occupy his meditations, tell him, that although he may break the heart of a father, the murder shall have no effect upon the resolution of his mind."

Saying this, he dismissed the messengers, confounded and astonished at the unbending sternness

of his soul. The Castilians applauded the conduct of their chief; although some of them conceived that he had carried his generous and punctilious integrity too far, when he respected the character of ambassadors in men who ought not to have claimed the privileges of such. Most of the Castilians, however, supposed that the message of Aben-Jacob would prove an idle threat, which would be abandoned as soon as it was perceived that it produced no effect upon the father; indeed, this fond hope was further confirmed, by the idea, that however cruel and unprincipled the Moor might be, yet the generous behaviour of Guzman towards his messengers would excite a reciprocity in his heart. In this, however, the event proved that they were most lamentably deceived, as honourable men will always be, when they judge by their own feelings of the sentiments of the depraved.

At the end of three hours another summons of trumpets was heard, and Guzman gave orders that no more messages from the enemy should be admitted, but proceeded to the walls of the city, to hear what new proposals the Moors might bring; but he was greeted by a sight capable of unmaning the stoutest heart. His unfortunate son stood surrounded by Moors; his neck bare, his hands and legs strongly bound, and ready for execution. Near him was seen the ferocious Aben-Jacob, and the still more odious Don Juan; while the whole of the besieging army stood in battle array. A

Moor then approached near enough to be heard, and, in a loud voice, exclaimed —

“Oh ! Guzman, behold thy son ! If, within the time allotted thee to determine, Tarifa does not surrender, the unfortunate youth shall fall a victim to his father’s cruelty.”

“Thou utterest rank falsehood, Moor !” replied, with indignant pride, the Governor. “If my son falls a victim, it will not be to my cruelty, but to your base cowardice and his own imprudence.”

“Then your resolution is fixed !”

“Moor, tamper not with the inflexible honour of Alonzo de Guzman !— consummate the horrid sacrifice ; and that no doubts may remain of my invincible resolution to adhere to my duty, take this token — that if you require a weapon for the murder of his son, his father presents you with it.”

And as he spoke, he hurled his own sword into the enemy’s camp, and then, with a firm step, after casting a mournful look toward his son, retired from the walls. Every one was struck at the sublime horror of a deed that far eclipsed the most renowned acts of the old Romans. A murmur of mingled awe and admiration ran through the spectators of the scene. But the unfortunate and heroic father had a new and overwhelming trial to undergo. It was not enough that he had seen his darling son — a son of whom even the great Guzman might be proud — bound like a felon, and ready to suffer a terrible death ; to add to the ago-

nies of this sacrifice, the stern patriot was now obliged to encounter the piercing cries and frantic appeals of a mother on the point of seeing her child murdered.

Doña Maria Coronel, the noble spouse of Guzman, had been noted for an heroism of character, and a magnanimity in suffering toil and danger, which had rendered her an object of admiration to her countrymen, and of tender devotion to her lord. But what courage or resolution is there strong enough to smother the yearnings of maternal love? Doña Maria would have fearlessly waded through fields teeming with horror and slaughter; she would with fortitude have undergone the hardest privations — the most poignant sorrows; but yet to see her only son bleed before her eyes, when it was in the power of his father to save him, filled her with an agony — a despair, that was as fearful in its expression as it was heart-rending to the noble Guzman.

Several of the most influential Castilians added their supplications to those of Doña Maria. They remonstrated with the inflexible Governor, that the King could never require so horrible a sacrifice of a father; and they urged that, even supposing Tarifa surrendered this time, the exertions of the Castilians would again effect its surrender to the Castilian dominion. But neither arguments, nor tears, nor supplications, produced any effect upon

the heroic father, save that of augmenting his affliction. In a sombre mood he paced the hall of his dwelling—now endeavouring to soothe the frantic grief of his Doña Maria, now repelling the mighty efforts made to conquer his inflexibility to the calls of unrelenting duty.

Thus time wore away in a dreadful suspense ; Don Pedro awaited his doom with fortitude, for he anticipated that, from the known character of his father, he had now nothing more to hope. Aben-Jacob, and his accomplice, the traitor Don Juan, with powerful vexation perceived that their expectations would never be accomplished. With furious disappointment they saw their diabolical stratagem baffled, for the term allowed for deliberation was fast approaching, and there was no sign that the heroic Guzman would relent ; while the resolute decision of his previous conduct, and the act of throwing his own sword into the camp, were indications that he would inflexibly adhere to his purpose.

A tumultuous noise was now heard at Tarifa : dismal cries of horror, mingled with martial sounds, filled the air, and everything announced some mighty event. Guzman rushed in agitation to the walls, which were already encumbered with soldiers ; he inquired into the cause of the commotion—a Castilian pointed in horror to the enemy's camp, where the unfortunate father perceived the

headless trunk of young Guzman distilling blood, whilst the gory head itself, affixed to a long spear, was presented as a ghastly trophy to his view!

“I feared,” said the magnanimous man, “that the enemy had taken the town; thank Heaven, it is not so!—I have done my duty!”

He then cast a mournful look towards the remains of his son, and confessed himself a father; tears started in his eyes, and bedewed his manly countenance, and, folding his arms, in a mood of utter desolation, he retired from the spot.

Contrary to the general expectations, the horrid sacrifice had been carried into effect. Aben-Jacob and Don Juan were actuated by a fiendish spirit of revenge, and, since they could not bend the soul of the stout Castilian, they resolved to break his heart. Don Juan especially longed for the death of the young Guzman; a powerful feeling of jealousy absorbed his thoughts, and he was happy to find an opportunity of disembarassing himself of a hated rival. He was therefore assiduous in stimulating the resolutions of his ally, the Moor; and, scarcely had the term granted to Guzman expired, when Don Juan instantly ordered the execution of the helpless young man. His death, however, when the first sensation of chilling horror had subsided, served to stimulate the Christians to a boundless desire of revenge; they were inflamed with a wish to fall upon the dastard Moors, and Don Alonzo Guzman, finding the greatest dif-

faculty in restraining their wild excitement, gave the order for a sally against the enemy.

The courage of the Castilians, seconded by feelings of indignation and vengeance, succeeded in causing the greatest slaughter and confusion amongst their enemies. In vain Aben-Jacob and Don Juan strove to stem the violence of the charge—their exertions proved in vain, and the chastisement of the Moors for their barbarity was as severe as it was amply deserved. The bleeding remains of Don Pedro de Guzman were rescued from the Moorish camp, and brought to Tarifa, where the funeral rites were bestowed upon them, causing the deepest sensation amongst the spectators of the mournful ceremony. The heroic father, having fulfilled his duty in so stern a manner, was now plunged in a moody reverie of sorrow, which, while it moved all the Castilians to pity, no one dared to disturb. To offer consolation to such a man as Guzman, and to offer it under existing circumstances, would have been an insult. He was therefore suffered to indulge his sad reflections, unless these were broken upon by the affairs of the siege, at which time all the feelings of the father were banished the heart of the warrior, and the duties of the vigilant patriot again engrossed his attention.

The heroic Castilian, his spouse, and friends, were not the only mourners for the death of Don Pedro. There was another, whose sorrow was

more poignant, whose despair seemed to produce the most melancholy effects upon her reason — the fond and unfortunate Zora was plunged in inconsolable affliction. The horrid fate of her lover continually haunted her fevered imagination. She considered her error the primary cause of the young Castilian's death, and she bitterly accused herself for the facility with which she had credited the treacherous words of her brother.

But, alas! the agony consequent on her lover's fearful doom was not the only trial she was compelled to undergo. The loathed obsequiousness of Don Juan still persecuted her with painful constancy, and these attentions had something fiendish and appalling since the hateful traitor had added to his other crimes the murder of his unfortunate rival. Zora, wrought to a pitch of desperation, fearlessly and resolutely spurned the miscreant from her, and, the intensity of her despair giving her courage for the most daring acts, she openly defied her merciless brother. She expressed her unconquerable aversion to the two princely ruffians, and her determination to suffer the most frightful death sooner than consent to become the bride of Don Juan. She was flattered and menaced; every art that shrewdness could invent — every dreadful means that baffled hopes, allied to cruelty, could suggest, were resorted to, but every endeavour to induce her to alter her resolution proved totally ineffectual.

The disappointed tormentors now adopted the most rigorous and execrable measures ; their unfortunate victim was closely immured, treated with every kind of contumely, and even unmanly violence was made use of, to punish her obstinacy, if not to change her determination. These accumulated trials, added to the agony of mind produced by her lover's catastrophe, soon wrought the most disastrous effects upon a delicate constitution. Scarcely a week had elapsed since the death of Don Pedro, when his unfortunate mistress, the lovely, the tender Zora, followed him to the grave.

The link which bound the two miscreants being thus removed, Don Juan's turbulent temper made him anxious to seek fortune elsewhere ; and he resolved to repair to some other spot, where his genius for doing evil might be called into action. Aben-Jacob suffered him to depart without regret, for he now began to reflect that his services were of no importance, since the hopes of capturing Tarifa were every day growing weaker. He made several attempts, both by stratagem and force, to render himself master of the town ; but the active vigilance of Don Alonzo was proof against surprisal, while his courage and resolution victoriously repelled any attack. At length Aben-Jacob, taught by repeated experience to respect the virtues and martial qualities of Guzman the Good, resolved in despair to raise the siege. This he effected in a few days, and retired to Africa full of

rage and shame; and thus the glorious defence of Tarifa was brought to a successful end.

The fame of Guzman's sacrifice and magnanimous conduct during the siege soon spread throughout Spain. King Sancho, anxious to testify his gratitude and respect for the illustrious patriot, wrote a letter expressive both of congratulation and condolence; saying, that sickness alone prevented him from going to meet the best of Castilians, and earnestly inviting him to his court. The greatest honours were showered upon Guzman. His march to Alcala de Hanares, where the King then resided, was, in truth, a triumphant procession. The inhabitants of cities, the retired peasants—every one ran to see that great and virtuous man; and amongst the thousand human beings that daily impeded his progress, there was not a single voice but what was expressive of admiration and respect.

Upon his arrival at Alcala de Henares, the King, attended by his whole court, went forth to meet him; and, having embraced him, and pointed him out to his attendants as the model of a true Castilian knight, gave him all the territories between the shores of the Guadalquiver and Guadalete. Guzman, the rest of his existence, preserved the same unspotted character for virtue, the same splendid name for heroism, that had marked all his previous life.

Such was Don Alonzo Perez de Guzman, surnamed the Good. One of the most illustrious

heroes of Spain ; a son of that land, conspicuous in the remotest ages for the magnanimous qualities of her children ; a land favourable to the growth of courage and honour, and integrity and noble pride, and all the most exalted attributes of man. A land, which, however sunk in the present day, in former times dazzled the neighbouring states with the brilliancy of her glory.

Guzman the Good was the first Lord of San Lucar de Barrameda, and founder of the house of Medina-Sidonia, which may be justly proud of so glorious a descent. The death of Guzman was in all respects equally glorious as the rest of his illustrious career. He was sent to besiege Gibraltar, which, after an obstinate resistance, surrendered, having remained in the possession of the Moors five hundred years. This was the last service which Guzman the Good did to his country ; and here his glorious life met with a glorious end. Having advanced in the pursuit of the Moors, who were spoiling the neighbourhood of Algeciras, he was surrounded by the enemy before a competent number of his own men were near, and slain after a gallant defence.

“ His memory ” (says Quintana) “ excites amongst us a respect equal to that which is inspired by the most celebrated worthies of antiquity—such as a Scipio, or an Epaminondas ; and his name, bearing the impress of the most exalted patriotism, is never pronounced but with a sort of religious veneration.”

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Reigns of Ferdinand the Fourth and Alonzo the Eleventh.

A PERIOD OF 55 YEARS.

A. D. 1295. UPON Ferdinand assuming the sceptre of Castile, this kingdom became again the theatre of new disturbances. The turbulent Infant Don Juan publicly styled himself king; and Don Diego Haro carried on a predatory course in the young Ferdinand's dominions. The Cortes were assembled at Valladolid, and the Infant Don Enrique, uncle of the king, was appointed his tutor during his minority. But the commotions increased apace. On one side, Don Juan called himself king, supported by Dyonisius, the king of Portugal; on the other, Don Alonzo de la Corda had the same pretensions, aided by the king of Aragon. But the effort of the queen-mother, Dona Maria, who justly deserves the title of Great, at length surmounted all the obstacles; and though the reign of her son for a long time was disturbed by the dissensions and feuds of the powerful houses of Haro and Lara, yet comparative tranquillity was gained.

1306. This year Gibraltar was taken from the Moors, but with the loss of the celebrated hero, Guzman the Good, who fell a victim to his bravery.

1312. The king died in an awful manner. He had ordered the Brothers Carvajal to be precipitated from a rock, on suspicion of murder. The brothers protested against the sentence, and claimed the privilege of a defence, but in vain; upon which they summoned Ferdinand to appear before the tribunal of God at the end of a month. The king died at the expiration of the term: on which account he was ever after called *El Emplazado*, or The Summoned.

Alonzo the Eleventh was about a year old when he suc-

ceeded his father on the throne. The same disturbances which had marked the minority of former sovereigns, were conspicuous in this ; yet Alonzo had the strongest party. At the head of this was his uncle Don Pedro, the old dowager queen Dona Maria, and the Haros ; whilst his competitor, the Infant Don Juan, counted amongst his adherents the Cordas, the Laras, &c.

1313. These disputes were nearly breaking into civil war, when the Cortes met at Valladolid, and intrusted the person of the king to his grandmother Dona Maria, and the regency of the state to Don Pedro and Don Juan, the leaders of the contending factions.

1324. Alonzo, now fourteen years of age, thought of assuming the reins of government ; but the princes Don Manuel, and Don Juan, surnamed *El Tuerto* (Blind of One Eye), were against his emancipation.

1333. The king rid himself of the disturbers of his kingdom in an unjustifiable manner. Don Juan (*El Tuerto*) was killed by stealth at Toro, whither he had repaired under the safe conduct of Alonzo ; and Haro was beheaded.

1334. Rebellion broke out, and civil war ravaged the land. Garcilaso was murdered.

1340. The great battle of Salado was fought, in which it is said that Abul-Hassan left two hundred thousand of his followers dead on the field of battle, whilst only twenty Christians perished. The honour of this battle belonged to the kings of Castile and Portugal ; the booty gained was immense ; the rejoicings upon this occasion were such as had never before been witnessed in Spain.

1350. A dreadful pestilence ravaged Spain. In some towns upwards of a hundred persons died every day ; the king himself was one of the victims. This event occurred on the 26th of May, of the year 1350, in the thirty-eighth year of his age.

The Brothers Carbajal.

But Heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me
That I must be their scourge and minister :
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him.

SHAKSPEARE.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE BROTHERS CARVAJAL.

The Brothers Carbajal.

IT was one of the darkest nights ever known ; the wind howled dismally, and a furious storm which had deluged the streets of Valencia rendered them solitary. Not a single human being was seen about, except a wretched beggar, who had taken refuge under the porch of a mansion near the palace ; but the inclemency of the weather was such that, despite of the hardships to which the houseless wanderer had been accustomed, he could not obtain a moment of slumber. He therefore beguiled his time by watching the rain as it fell, and indulging in speculations which were not perhaps of the most holy description. The storm at length subsided ; the wind began to assuage its violence, and nothing remained of the previous elemental tumult, except an awful and almost ominous darkness.

At this moment the mendicant perceived two figures dimly moving from the opposite side, and approaching the place where he lay, crouching like a dog in his lair. Upon a nearer inspection he perceived that they were those of men, closely enveloped in their cloaks. The obscurity, however, which prevailed, did not allow him to recog-

nise their features, though they now stood close to the porch, where they remained as if in expectation of some event. The beggar's suspicions were awakened when he beheld two mysterious personages posted in so strange a manner at that time of night; but he was in the state in which a man has nothing to apprehend from robbers, and accordingly, instead of fear, curiosity only was excited in his breast. The strangers seemed resolved not to quit their post, and the prior occupant of the porch was equally determined to observe all their motions.

“He cannot have left the place yet,” said one of the strangers; “it is hardly eleven, and, besides, the storm must have hindered him from attempting to quit the palace and regain his dwelling.”

“Why, in troth,” returned the other, “it is a most unceremonious night, but most fit for our purpose. Do you know that I once began to apprehend that our ministry would be needless, seeing that the end of the world was approaching?”

“It was an awful storm, but it has produced the good effect of rendering the streets of Valencia most conveniently solitary. Why, if our intentions had been known, the weather could not have better favoured our designs.”

A clock struck the eleventh hour; the nocturnal ramblers made a movement, and one of them observed—

“Now let us approach the palace; otherwise the

traitor may escape. Keep yourself in readiness, and let us advance."

As he said this, they proceeded cautiously and slowly towards the palace, which was at a short distance.

"Holy Saint Joseph!" muttered the beggar, crossing himself, "what can those worthy cavaliers be after?—no saintly work, I trow: surely they don't mean to murder King Ferdinand! that truly would be a pity, for he is very young; though, by the by, I ought not to take much interest in him, for they say he is a terrible glutton, and I am always starving. But, let me see—should I not, like a good subject, sound the alarm? No, no! what business have I to interfere in matters that don't concern me? Why, if the King is killed, there will be another provided for us, and it is most certain that I shall remain exactly as I was before; besides, I must look to my own safety before all things, and should my clamorous mouth commit any indiscretion, it is more than probable that those adventuresome cavaliers would treat me to the favours with which they intend to regale my betters.

Whilst the tattered tenant of the porch was indulging in these wise and prudential speculations the two individuals had approached the palace. The darkness, however, was so intense as to prevent the beggar from farther observation of them. A few moments elapsed, and a low rumbling noise was heard, which was followed by a sort of grap-

pling, which terminated in a deep, painful moan, like that of aman wounded to death.

“Heaven defend us !” muttered the beggar, “they have done the business, and some unworthy Christian is sent to his last account. May God forgive his soul ! for there is no doubt it stands in want of forgiveness ; and now let me be careful that I am not placed in a situation to need a similar pardon.”

The two men hurried back, and took shelter under the porch.

“Let us seek refuge here,” said one, in an agitated tone of voice. “A pursuit would commence, if we fled ; though the streets are solitary, we might perchance meet some man, and——”

“But think you,” returned the other, “that this porch will prove a competent place of safety ?”

“Yes ; the darkness of the night impedes the perception of an object at the smallest distance.”

“So it does,” quoth the beggar to himself, as he endeavoured to crouch closer, and render himself as small as possible.

“But, should a search be commenced ?” muttered one of the assassins.

“Hush ! they will never suppose that we are so near. Let us keep quiet, and there is no danger of our being taken.”

“But do you think that the blow was so well struck as to insure the death of the victim ?”

“My arm is no puny weapon, and my wrongs

most efficiently seconded my strength. Fear not —our enemy hath but few moments to live.”

“ Thank Heaven, we are amply revenged !”

“ Yes, and Carvajal has the only bar to his happiness removed.”

A great rumour and confusion was now heard at the entrance of the palace ; torches were seen, by the reflection of which, despite of the wind which now and then extinguished them, a great concourse of people became obscurely perceptible.

“ Upon second thoughts,” said one of the ruffians, “ we should act more prudently in quitting this place ; those fatal lights may prove our ruin.”

“ Yes,” continued the other. “ Besides, the first disorder having once subsided, they will begin a strict search.”

They now hastily, though cautiously, left their lurking-place, and sought safety in speedy flight.

“ Blessed St. Joseph !” muttered the beggar, in amazement, “ who could have supposed that the brothers Carvajal would turn midnight murderers ! —Well, there is no knowing what men may come to. After what I have seen to-night, I should not be surprised if I myself should become a dishonourable character.”

By this time lights were approaching towards the porch.

“ This way the assassins must have fled,” said a voice.

“Search well every place,” cried another; “leave not the smallest nook unexplored: owing to the darkness of the night, perchance the villains would rather trust to concealment than flight.”

“I see some one crouching in that porch,” quoth the first speaker; “examine it well—for my part, I think it is a dog.”

“And a most miserable one,” thought the beggar.

“Yes, it is a dog; but we may as well look closer.”

They advanced nearer.

“Just Heavens! it is a man! Here is one of the assassins! Ay, ay, he feigns to be asleep; but it won’t serve him. Holy Virgin! what a murderous, villanous appearance, the rascally miscreant has! Secure him!—no doubt he is the murderer.”

“Holla! Master, get up—get up!” cried another, “ere I make thee spring like quicksilver, with a gentle insinuation of my pike. What an ingenious scoundrel he is!—see the bed he has chosen for such a night as this!”

The beggar, no ways pleased at the turn which affairs had taken, now rose, and began to expostulate with his captors. “Good *caballeros*,” he cried, in a whining tone, “as ye hope for salvation, do not be rash. Let me set you to rights. I am no assassin, but a poor mendicant; and with regard to my bed, I swear to you, gentlemen, it is no matter of choice; for I would have most willingly preferred a better, if I could have found it.”

“Come, come, thou wretched sinner, do not attempt to cajole us; we have a keen scent in tracing out a villanous dog.”

“Good sirs, I don’t mean to contradict the goodness of your nose; but, upon my soul, I can assure you that this time, at least, your sagacious nostrils are at fault. I am as innocent as the child unborn, so Heaven keep me in its grace!”

“It won’t do, sir villain! thy foolery won’t deceive us, and thou must follow us. Secure his *arms*, my good companions.”

“Arms! Heaven bless me, I have no arms!”

“No buffoonery, sirrah!—bind him well.”

“Oh! sirs! treat me with a little more mercy, and I think I shall be able to discover the assassins.”

“Ay, ay, I think we have discovered one already. However, any farther information must be given before the King.”

“The King! why, is he alive?—Heaven be blessed!”

“What is the rascal at?—Yes, the King is alive; sound in body and mind, to see thee made dog’s meat of.”

“Nay, I am willing to confess all I know.”

“Confess! Ay, that thou shalt; for if thy tongue is not as sufficiently nimble in that matter as in others, we have some ingenious machines to improve its functions. Bring him along!”

The party, with feelings of triumph, conducted the beggar to the palace, which was thrown into

great excitement upon their arrival. "The assassin is secured!" cried various voices; and every one was eager to obtain a sight of the ruffian.

They led him into the hall to confront him with the dying man. This precaution, however, came too late. When the supposed murderer was placed before the victim, he was already a lifeless corpse. The person who had been so treacherously slain, was a young and gallant cavalier, of an illustrious lineage, and the favourite of the King. His name was Benavides, and his family, which had rendered some services to Ferdinand, were held in great esteem by him, especially the murdered cavalier, who was admitted to his most intimate and familiar companionship. This circumstance rendered his loss doubly to be regretted by the King, who made a vow to be most active in the pursuit of the guilty, and most merciless in inflicting a fearful retribution. When Benavides was raised from the ground, he was so far advanced in the path to the grave, that the only discovery he could make was, that he was murdered by two individuals. Shortly after, he expired; and the King, in a mood of mingled rage and affliction, stood by his side, making vows of terrible import. Several parties had gone in the pursuit of the murderers, and after a short time had elapsed, the one that brought the beggar made its appearance.

The apprehension of this man afforded some consolation to the sorrowing Ferdinand; for, although no trace of guilt was seen upon him, save that of

having been found crouched under a porch at night, yet, as he offered to make some discoveries, he thought that his object would be fulfilled.

“Dost thou know this murdered cavalier?” inquired the King of the prisoner, with a terrible frown.

“Yes, my liege!” answered the beggar. “It is the noble Don Benavides; I have seen him many a time, and have often experienced his charity.”

“What’s thy name?”

“Diego Raposo, please your Highness.”

“And how came you to be lurking about at this hour of the night?”

“Because I have nowhere to go for shelter.”

“And what is it you know about this murder?”

“That the brothers Carvajal are the authors of it!”

The King started at the name: it awoke in his mind associations far from pleasing, to judge from the forbidding expression which suddenly overspread his countenance. Diego Raposo then entered into a detailed account of the adventure which has been narrated above, and the apprehensions of the King, who in the greatest excitement cast a mournful look on his dead friend, were confirmed.

“My brave Benavides,” he said, “rest in peace, and be satisfied that thy unmanly murder shall be amply and most deeply avenged.”

He then commanded Diego Raposo to be kept in custody, and gave immediate orders for the apprehension of the brothers Carvajal.

The Carvajales were two young cavaliers of

noble birth and connexions, but whom the King did not regard with any friendly feeling, chiefly because they were obnoxious to his favourite Benavides. A family feud appears to have existed between the parties, but it was insinuated that several other reasons strengthened their hostile sentiments. The high degree of favour which Benavides enjoyed from the King could not but excite the jealousy of other noblemen ; and it was reported that no one was more galled than the Carvajales. Besides, the elder Carvajal felt the most violent passion for Doña Violante, the sister of Benavides ; a passion which, though returned by the lady, was strenuously opposed by her brother.

He had indeed, on repeated occasions, shown his dislike for Carvajal, and even prohibited Doña Violante from holding farther intercourse with him ; but these orders, as it may be supposed, were not very scrupulously obeyed by the young lady. One day a serious quarrel had taken place on this account, and the two foes were on the point of proceeding to violence, when they were happily prevented by interfering friends. Carvajal, however, made vows of revenge, and Benavides, burning with equal animosity, only awaited another opportunity to give it vent. All these circumstances strongly influenced the mind of the King and his courtiers in forming their opinion of the murder, and, added to what Diego Raposo related, they formed a fearful presumptive evidence against the Carvajales.

On the very morning preceding the night on which the murder of Benavides was committed, the elder Carvajal had been seen patrolling near his garden. The constant attendance of Benavides at the palace generally afforded him an opportunity of seeing his beloved Violante, and he now proposed to her to take a determined step and free herself from the dominion of her brother. But he had met his mistress more agitated than ever. She started in alarm upon his arrival, and with tears in her eyes besought him to depart.

“My noble friend,” said she, with much emotion, “fate has decreed that our happiness shall not be accomplished. Even this very moment I tremble for your safety — fly from the city ere all possibility of escape is denied you.”

“Thy fears, sweet Violante,” answered Carvajal, with a smile, “greatly magnify the danger. I apprehend no surprisal, and, at all events, my trusty sword never quits my side.”

“Oh ! speak not those words—think that it is a brother, my sole protector in this world, against whom those unholy thoughts are entertained. Let me counsel you.”

“What !” cried Carvajal, impatiently, “am I to be tamely enduring the haughty scorn of that proud cavalier, because he is your brother ? In sooth, this privilege has saved him more than once from my justly-provoked indignation ; but the forbearance of a nobleman must have its limits, more

particularly when it encroaches upon his honour ; and my honour is deeply suffering from the repeated slights of Benavides. To terminate our unfortunate family feud, have I not nobly offered to bury all past scenes in oblivion by becoming your husband ? and how have my proposals been treated by your arrogant brother ? I shame to say it—even with contempt—and why ?—Is the blood that circulates in his veins more pure, more noble, than mine ?—No. Do I yield to him in the elevated qualities of an honourable cavalier ?—No, no, Heaven forefend ! Whence, then, his insulting pride ? From the favouritism of a weak monarch, whose minion and companion in debauchery he does not scruple to be. Fine titles, indeed, to reject the alliance of Carvajal !”

“Calm your feelings, my dear friend,” said Violante, interposing : “that you have much cause for resentment, I readily admit ; but I always tremble when I consider the mournful results to which that resentment may lead you. Know that the danger which surrounds you is increased tenfold ; this very morning, my brother, ere he set out for the palace, gave me fatal hints of some plan in contemplation against your and your brother’s liberty. Your having seconded the pretensions of Don Alonzo de la Corda, when he contended for the crown, is not yet forgotten by the King, however policy may have prevented him from giving vent to his vindictive feelings. Ah ! he only wants

a specious pretence for the indulgence of his revenge, and that pretext your violent temper will not be long in affording. My brother, on his side, will exert all his endeavours to work thy ruin: let me, therefore, advise you to absent yourself from Valencia for some time; and remain assured my love shall experience no diminution."

"How often have you pressed the odious subject upon my unwilling heart! The idea of leaving you exposed to the caprices of your brother, conveys more terror to my imagination than the combined wrath of that brother, and the King, whose favourite he is. Yet, to calm thy fears, I will at last consent. Yes, I will consent," he added in a fearful tone of voice; "but, so God help me! I will some day have ample revenge for the wrongs I am compelled to suffer."

"Oh! speak not thus! Think, that while your heart meditates those fatal plans of revenge, it is against the heart of her thou lovest you prepare them—thy enemy is my brother. Oh! my own Carvajal, let the entreaties of Violante have some power in softening the stern purposes of thy soul. Retire but for three months from Valencia, and all will go well."

"Yes," resumed Carvajal in the same ominous tone, "I will quit this odious town; but, mayhap, Violante may rue the day when she counselled my departure. Farewell! God alone can know if we shall meet again in this world."

“Oh, my friend! my own lord! those fearful words fill me with horror! Some rash, desperate attempt occupies thy mind. Stay — oh! stay, for I would rather bear the brunt of my brother’s anger than see you leave me in this distressing manner.”

“Farewell, Violante,” repeated Carvajal, a little softened, “it is well we should separate — Heaven knows where my justly indignant heart might lead me! Fare thee well!”

As he said this, in a hurried manner he quitted her presence. Poor Violante remained plunged in a mood of bitterest affliction — there was something so painful, so ominous, in the tone and manner of her lover, that her heart was filled with the darkest apprehensions.

Carvajal, upon quitting his mistress, speedily repaired to his brother, to whom he was devotedly attached, and who returned his friendship with an equal warmth of regard.

“Alonzo,” he said, in some emotion, “I will at length follow thy advice, and quit this hateful city.”

“Thank Heaven, dear brother, thy good sense has triumphed at last over thy unfortunate passion. I always confided in the generous pride of thy heart, which, however enthralled it might for some time be by the shackles of love, would, I knew, at length break them, when they essayed to

impose an equal slavery upon thy better spirit. The haughty Benavides should never have had it in his power so to humiliate the Carvajales. But, however, I will not upbraid you for what is past ; let us rather think of more suitable plans for the future. When shall we leave Valencia ?”

“ This very night,” answered Carvajal, “ I am anxious to depart. Our course must be directed to Toro, where the greatest number of our adherents and partisans are to be found. The King may be tempted to persecute us, and we must place ourselves in a state of vigorous defence.”

“ Strange words these, brother,” said the younger Carvajal : “ dost thou apprehend any hostile design from Ferdinand ?”

“ I know not what I think, nor what I utter — my mind is a chaos of contending sentiments. Love, revenge, shame, disappointment, alternately distract my soul. Oh, my good brother ! were it not for thy protecting company, I should hurry to some desperate course. Benavides must not insult the Carvajales with impunity.”

“ Benavides,” answered Alonzo, “ shall meet his retribution when he least expects it. Trust me, Carvajal, ’tis no slight offence to be the minion of a king. There are so many interested in the downfall and death of a favourite, that——”

“ Hold, brother ! there comes our enemy.”

Benavides passed the brothers, casting upon

them a look of deep scorn ; the elder Carvajal laid his hand on his weapon, but his brother restrained his anger.

“Not yet, brother, not yet ; reserve thyself for a fitter opportunity.”

The account which the beggar Diego Raposa had given the King, added to several other particulars which every moment came to light, fully established the guilt of the Carvajales. But nothing was so prejudicial to their cause as their flight. Upon the arrival of the King’s message to apprehend them, they learnt that the brothers were nowhere to be found ; the most diligent search was made in the city of Valencia, and the neighbouring villas and mansions, but without effect. Violante, in an agony of despair, as soon as the horrid fate of her brother was made known to her, unfolded, as in duty bound, the conversation which had passed between her and the elder Carvajal, on the morning preceding the murder of Benavides.

The mysterious words of her cruel lover, together with every other circumstance already detailed, removed any remaining doubt concerning the perpetrators of the atrocious deed ; and not only the King, but even those who were favourably disposed towards the Carvajales, evinced their indignation against the delinquent brothers. Ferdinand’s feelings were powerfully wrought upon. His affection for the murdered Benavides was sin-

cere, and the untimely fate of that cavalier seemed to have rendered him more dear to his royal friend. But the King had other motives, and motives of a political tendency, to be indefatigable in his exertions to obtain the apprehension of the Carvajales. He had all along cherished a rancorous hatred towards that family for their well-known attachment to the party that upheld the pretensions of Don Alonzo de la Corda to the throne. Ferdinand had resolved to pardon the vanquished party, but could not forget those who had been his enemies. He was always in a mood of distrust, and indeed in this was partly justified by the turbulent nature of those times, when struggles for the crown of Castile were so common, that it sufficed if the pretender had the mere shadow of a claim to it, and wealth enough to support his pretensions, to find numerous supporters among the people.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that the King was in hourly apprehension of a renewal of disturbances, and that he should look with an eye of jealousy on those individuals whom he knew were ever ready to dispute his authority. Of these the brothers Carvajal were two of the most conspicuous; and Ferdinand having now, on account of their crime, more than sufficient reason to cause their death, without any danger of incurring the just resentment of their partisans, turned his thoughts exclusively upon the accomplishment of their doom. His endeavours, however, to cap-

ture the brothers proved for some time totally abortive. Their departure from Valencia had been so precipitate and secret, that no one could form an idea of the place to which they had fled for refuge. It was, however, generally believed that they had retreated into Portugal, as King Dionysius had always countenanced the disturbers of the peace of Castile.

In this state of uncertainty some time elapsed, till at length intelligence was brought to Ferdinand that the brothers were residing at Martos, a place noted for the spirit of revolt which governed its inhabitants. The report also, that the Laras had been of late in that town and its district, awakened the just alarm of the King. He conceived that some new plot was in contemplation, and that the Carvajales were two of its principal agents. He accordingly determined to surprise them before they had time to gather sufficient strength to carry their rebellious designs into effect ; and hastily collected about a thousand of his most devoted adherents, amongst which he took the prudent care of numbering the relatives and friends of the murdered Benavides ; and while he had it reported that he was returning to Seville, he secretly directed his course towards Martos.

His appearance in this place was so sudden and unexpected, that the first intelligence which the brothers Carvajal had of his arrival was from those who came to apprehend them ; they were surprised

quietly sitting at table with their friends, and, to their amazement, they found the apartment quickly filled with armed men, some of whom immediately proceeded to secure them.

“What temerity is this!” cried the elder Carvajal, indignantly. “Who dares attempt thus to affront—by what authority burst you thus upon our privacy?”

“By the King’s!” sternly answered Don Mendo Benavides, a cousin of the deceased. “All attempt at resistance is vain; therefore, prepare to come before his Highness, without opposition.”

“And what may be the good pleasure of King Ferdinand with us?” inquired Alonzo Carvajal, with a bitter smile. “Methinks he might have hit upon a more courteous manner of sending an invitation.”

“The invitation is most fit for the guests,” scornfully returned Benavides. “Soldiers, take charge of your prisoners.”

“Prisoners, by order of the King!” exclaimed one of the Laras present; “what crime is imputed to my noble friends?”

“Ah! Señor de Lara,” quoth Benavides, “dost thou feel some pangs of conscience? These clandestine meetings at Martos purport no good to the state; but, happily, Ferdinand is as sagacious as he is brave, and the machinations of turbulent plotters are completely overturned by his sudden arrival at Martos.”

“Plotters!” cried Lara, proudly; “in troth, if such were the characters which we had assumed, our sagacity would have been at least equal to that of the King, which so much excites your wonder. The man is a liar and a foul slanderer that dares throw any imputation upon our conduct at Martos.”

“We come not to discuss the point,” interrupted Benavides, “but to conduct two dark criminals before the King, that they may receive the sentence due to their guilt.”

“Guilt!” exclaimed Carvajal.

“Thy memory is, forsooth, most negligent,” cried Benavides, with irony; “but I shall be kind enough to refresh it. Yes, noble cavaliers,” he added, turning to the company, “these brave knights are guilty of a base and cowardly murder!”

“Blasted be the tongue that pronounces the foul slander!” exclaimed the brothers, fiercely.

Much confusion ensued the announcement of so dark an accusation. Every one of the guests had surmised that the guilt imputed to the Carvajales was of a political nature. None of them could suppose the brothers capable of so atrocious a deed as murder; and though obscure rumours had reached some of them concerning the mysterious death of Benavides, and the suspicion which pointed out the delinquents, they had indignantly discarded such ideas from their minds. But now strange

misgivings arose, for they could not imagine that the King would take the violent measure they had witnessed, without sufficient ground to justify it.

The excitement produced at Martos by the imprisonment of the Carvajales, was very great. The circumstances adduced against them served fully to establish their guilt; and though some harboured feelings of pity towards them, all were unanimous as to the justice of the King's conduct. The brothers stoutly denied any participation in the horrid act; but their protestations weighed lightly against the load of evidence brought to condemn them.

The Carvajales appeared before the King with a fearless demeanour, which some interpreted as the calmness of innocence, but most as the callous apathy of crime. Ferdinand, as soon as he saw them, intimated to them the guilt of which they stood charged.

"Sir King, we call Heaven to witness our innocence; where is our accuser? Let him appear, that we may confound the wretch."

As there was no real accuser, Diego Raposo, the beggar, was brought forward to give his evidence. Yet he could not positively swear that the Carvajales were the murderers, though the two men he had seen under the porch resembled them much in stature and voice. Other witnesses were produced, who related many facts tending to confirm the animosity which had existed between the brothers

and Benavides. When the whole sum of evidence was set before the Carvajales, the elder, in a stern and angry tone, exclaimed—

“Just Heavens! and are two noble cavaliers to stand an ignominious trial, upon so slight a plea, that not even an accuser is found to prefer the charge? Oh! King, however hostile the feelings thou mayest entertain against the family of Carvajal—however base the opinion that thou hast of two honourable cavaliers—thinkest thou also that we are cowards, and that we stood in so much dread of the prowess of Benavides, as to have recourse to so vile a means of indulging our revenge? Could we not have provoked an open quarrel? Was his arm stronger than mine?—his heart more courageous? Why kill him treacherously in the darkness of night, when I could with equal facility have effected my purpose openly in the light of day?”

“Because thou didst tremble at the consequences,” replied the King; “because thou knewest full well the favour which the unfortunate Benavides enjoyed with the King: thy guilt is fully proved, and thy defence, despite of its ingenuity, cannot turn the balance in favour of thy innocence. No, traitors! you are convicted of a dark—a degrading crime; and this only was wanted to fill up the measure of your turbulent career. Already had my generosity pardoned you a hundred political delinquencies. Your rebellious spirit, your con-

tinual caballing with the enemies of my crown, had already given me just ground to consign you to a well-merited doom ; but I was merciful, imprudently merciful towards inveterate offenders ; but now considerations of prudence and pity must give way, and it only remains to pronounce your sentence."

"Pronounce our sentence!" cried the younger Carvajal ; "our criminality is not yet proved."

"Hold, assassin!" fiercely exclaimed the King. "What other proofs do we want to convince even the most sceptical? Your known hatred to Benavides—the different times that the elder Carvajal has been heard to utter threats of vengeance against his foe—the mysterious words which he spoke upon taking leave of his sister, as he said, for ever—the traced resemblance between you and the murderers—the fatal words which Diego Raposo heard you pronounce under the porch immediately after the commission of the crime : *Carvajal has now the only bar to his happiness removed*—your precipitate and unexpected flight from Valencia at the time of the murder—the words of a dying Benavides implying fearful suspicion—his opposition to the union of Carvajal with his sister Violante ;—these, and several minor facts, afford ample proof to confirm your guilt, and now you must prepare to meet the award of justice. Take these wretches," he then added, turning to his attendants, "to the high rock near this town, and

precipitate them into the abyss below ; that their unworthy bodies may be torn and mangled, and find no other tombs than the maws of ravenous birds ! Take them hence immediately !”

This awful sentence produced a great sensation amongst the spectators of the scene. The brothers heard it with feelings of horror, but with a stern dignity of manner.

“ Oh ! thou merciless, unjust King,” indignantly cried Alonzo Carvajal, “ all the circumstances which you have brought against us amount to presumptions only, but not to proofs. And are two noble cavaliers to be condemned to a horrid doom upon mere presumptions ? Is the evidence of a wretched beggar, and words which might have been pronounced by others as well as by us, to determine our death ? Oh ! Ferdinand, pause a moment ere you rashly decide. In virtue of our rights as *ricos-hombres* of Castile, we plead to be judged by a competent body of our peers — we demand that a deliberate trial be commenced, and every means of defence allowed us, as in equity due ; otherwise thou art guilty of a murder more foul than that of Benavides.”

“ Lead them to execution,” cried Ferdinand hastily.

“ ’Tis well, thou unjust ruler of Castile—’tis well,” cried the elder Carvajal proudly ; “ we are the victims of thy jealous fears. You wanted a pretext for our death—you have found it ; and however weak and unfounded, you seize it eagerly to

free yourself of men whom you hate, and whose attachment to your enemies renders them dangerous in your sight. Ay, we are murdered, inhumanly murdered; not for the death of Benavides—No; but for political motives which you consider necessary to the safety of thy crown. It is not our hatred to the house of Benavides that urges you, but our regard for that of La Corda. We are innocent of the murder of Benavides!" He then paused for an instant, but in an awful tone of voice continued—"Hear, oh! ruthless King! we summon thee to appear on the thirtieth day from this before the tribunal of Heaven, to answer for the injustice thou committest against two innocent and honourable cavaliers."

Saying this, with a stately bearing he accompanied his guards towards the place of execution. A vast crowd followed the culprits, and the King, fearing some attempt to rescue them, ordered all the forces under his command to accompany the Carvajales to the fatal rock. Two or three ecclesiastics also attended them to administer the comforts of religion in their last moments. They used every means of persuasion—they promised heaven, and threatened eternal punishments, in order to persuade them to confess their guilt; but the brothers resolutely maintained their innocence, and arrived at the place of execution in a collected and dignified manner.

The sight of the high rock and the fearful precipice below, for a moment imparted a thrill of

horror to the victims ; but they soon recovered from the passing sensation, and regained their wonted composure. In this manner they ascended the dreadful spot, and were placed at the verge of the summit. They then knelt for a few moments, and seemed collected in prayer ; after which they rose, and, having again declared their innocence, reiterated the awful summons which they had made to the King.

The elder Carvajal then took a scarf, and, putting it into the hands of the leader, who stood near, in a tone broken by emotion, said—

“ Sir, as you are a noble and good cavalier, deliver this to Doña Violante Benavides, and assure her that her unfortunate lover persisted in his innocence until death. Tell her not to curse my memory, for it will not be long ere just Heaven will, in its mercy, vindicate it from the least aspersion.

Saying this, he dashed a tear from his eye, and approached his brother, who stood near, in a mood of mournful calmness. The two brothers then again protested their innocence, and, embracing in the tenderness of grief, locked as they were in each other's arms, exclaimed that they were ready.

In an instant the executioner came forward, the clock struck twelve, and the brothers Carvajal were hurled from the fatal rock. A cry of horror burst from the spectators, and the sensation of awe was augmented when the victims were observed

below, struggling in the agonies of death, still locked in each other's arms !

The horror of their fate awoke some sentiments of pity amongst the crowd. Opinions were divided with regard to their innocence : some believed the protestations of the dying men ; others considered them as the last struggles of cavaliers, who, however guilty, would never consent to acknowledge the stigma which would attach to their name. These several speculations gradually subsided, till at length most doubts were removed, and it was generally believed that the brothers had suffered justly. Nearly a month had elapsed from the day of execution, and the thoughts of the spectators of that horrid tragedy had turned upon very different subjects, when King Ferdinand began to complain of illness.

He was ordered to keep his bed. His malady increased ; when, having inquired what day of the month it was from the death of the Carvajales, and being answered the thirtieth, a fearful gloom overspread his features, and he announced that his death was at hand. That very day, the 7th of September, 1312, Ferdinand the Fourth expired,* on which account he was ever afterwards called *el Emplazado*, or the Summoned.

This singular death of the King produced an extraordinary sensation amongst his subjects. Every one remembered the awful summons of the brothers

* This fact is admitted by all historians.

Carvajal, and every one saw the hand of Providence in the untimely fate of Ferdinand. One or two days previous to his death, a dispatch had been sent to him from Portugal, which, owing to the state of his health, had not been examined. Shortly after his death, however, it was broken open, when a letter was discovered containing a full account and confession of the murder of Benavides.

This had been committed by two individuals whom that proud lord had treated with scorn: they had sent a challenge, which he had contemptuously refused to accept, on the plea of their not being of gentle birth. This had taken place at Seville, shortly after the accession of Ferdinand; but the aggrieved persons, who were also of the party of La Corda, and by this means knew the Carvajales, went privately to Valencia, to wreak their vengeance on the enemy. The execution of those unfortunate brothers had been so sudden that their fate could not be averted by this late confession, which was only sent to vindicate their memory from the supposed guilt.

The sorrowing Doña Violante Benavides, who had still cherished a half-smothered affection for Carvajal, no sooner heard this vindication than all her former fondness returned. She tenderly kissed the scarf—that mournful gage of his last moments, and opposing the importunities of her relative Benavides, retired to conventual seclusion, where she terminated her melancholy days.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Reign of Don Pedro, surnamed the Cruel.

A PERIOD OF 19 YEARS.

1350. DON PEDRO the Cruel ascended the throne of Castile without opposition, upon the death of Don Alonzo, his father ; but soon began to give signs of the dreadful calamities and cruelties that were to mark his disastrous reign.

1351. Dona Leonor de Guzman, the late king's mistress, having always excited the deepest hatred in the bosom of Don Pedro's mother, was now considered as a prisoner of state, and having been carried to the castle of Talavera, was there inhumanly put to death. The pernicious counsels of Don Juan Alonzo de Albuquerque, who endeavoured to avail himself of the old queen's and her son's violent passion against all the adherents of the unfortunate Leonor, now instigated the king to look with a jealous eye on all her children and relatives. Don Henry fled to the Asturias. Don Pedro, amidst his faults, gave a proof of prudence and judgment, by reducing the fortresses and villages called *Behetrias** to some order : till now they had been considered completely independent, and had been a source of much confusion. The matter was discussed at the Cortes at Burgos, but the *Behetrias* were not abolished.

* These were towns and castles that had the privilege of naming a chief to rule them. It was an institution begun in the earlier times, and might be of use in the petty wars against the Moors.

1353. Don Pedro saw at the house of Albuquerque the celebrated Dona Maria Padilla, and from that moment began that strong attachment which was only terminated by death. Meantime, Blanche, of Bourbon, the French princess, who had been asked in marriage for Don Pedro, arrived at Valladolid, where the king met her. He, however, soon abandoned Blanche, to return to the arms of his beloved Maria.

1356. A powerful league of the nobility, at the head of which was Henry Count of Trastamara, was formed to advocate the cause of queen Blanche, who was kept in a sort of honourable confinement, whilst the king publicly carried on his amour with Maria Padilla.

1357. Don Fadrique was put to death in the Alcazar of Seville, in the presence of his cruel brother. Tello would have shared the same fate, but that he fled into France. The civil war was now openly raging in Spain ; the excesses of the king, added to the ambition of his factious nobles, plunged the nation into a series of calamities.

1362. One of the most cruel and disgraceful acts of Pedro's reign was committed this year. The Moorish king of Granada, Abu Said, or *el Rey Bermejo* (the Red King), as the Spanish historians call him, had taken refuge in the Christian court by Pedro's own invitation. Pedro hearing that he possessed a treasure, caused him to be killed ; some say that this atrocious act was perpetrated with his own hand.

1366. Queen Blanche was secretly put to death, as it is supposed, by order of the king ; some say that she was poisoned, others that she was beheaded ; it is no less certain, however, that the commotions redoubled in Castile after this event. The Count of Trastamara, with the aid of the famous Bertrand du Guesclin, and a gallant host of French knights, was proclaimed king of Castile at Calahoma. Henry proceeded to Burgos ; Don Pedro fled to Seville ; the whole country began to declare for the new king. Toledo surrendered to Henry. At length the king of Castile was obliged to leave the coun-

try in a solitary galley, and make his retreat good to Portugal. He was, however, coldly received ; and Don Pedro, uncertain where to bend his melancholy course, repaired at length to Corunna, in Galicia, where he was joined by a faithful knight, Don Ferran de Castro, who from that moment never forsook his fortunes : meantime the king's treasure had fallen into the power of the admiral Bocanegra. Henry entered Seville ; and Don Pedro, unable any longer to sustain the war, fled to Bayonne, where Edward the Black Prince then ruled as prince of Aquitaine. The generous Edward afforded an hospitable welcome to the fugitive king, and a negotiation was soon entered upon for the recovery of the kingdom of Castile. The English prince, moved to pity by the situation of Don Pedro, promised him his aid. Accordingly he crossed the Pyrenees with Sir John Chandos and the flower of English chivalry. It was agreed that John Duke of Lancaster should be married to Costanza, Don Pedro's daughter ; and that, upon the death of the king, the duke, in right of his wife, should mount the throne of Castile.

1367. The two parties now prepared for the battle. Henry brought into the field a numerous and gallant army ; at length an engagement took place near Najara, in which the greatest achievements were performed on both sides. But a signal victory was at length obtained by Edward, as splendid as those of Poitiers and Cressy. Henry fled to Avignon, and in a few days Don Pedro was replaced on the throne. The lessons of adversity were, however, completely lost on the king ; he again gave vent to his inordinate propensities ; several cruel acts signalized his progress to Seville ; amongst other victims he ordered Bocanegra to be killed, and a principal lady to be burnt. These cruelties, added to his ingratitude and want of faith in the fulfilment of his promises, disgusted Edward, and he finally abandoned Don Pedro.

1368. Trastamara, who had fled to Avignon, seeing that the Castilians were again disposed to shake off the iron

dominion of Don Pedro, resolved to make another attempt for the crown. He had an interview with his friend Bertrand Du Guesclin and with the prince of Bearne; they promised him their assistance, and soon after Henry returned to Spain at the head of a competent army. The citizens of Burgos went immediately to meet him upon the first news of his arrival in Spain. Many other towns and fortresses in the northern provinces of the kingdom soon declared themselves for Trastamara, and the contest for the crown was renewed, if possible, with greater animosity than ever.

1369. Henry laid siege to Toledo, which adhered faithfully to the king. Pedro hastily collected his forces, but he was held in such detestation that he could not bring into the field an army equal to that of his rival; a battle was fought, in which Henry was victorious, and Pedro compelled to make a precipitate flight to the castle of Montiel. He was immediately surrounded by his enemies, who now built a wall to remove the possibility of his escape. The situation of Don Pedro became every day more distressing. He was at last deceived, and allured to go secretly to Du Guesclin, who, instead of aiding his flight, delivered him into the power of his brother. An unnatural contest now took place between the brothers, in which Pedro had the advantage; but one of the bystanders aided Henry, who at length killed the king. Don Pedro has been looked upon as a monster, to be placed by the side of the Neros and Domitians; yet he was distinguished for many good qualities: he was brave, prudent, and a lover of justice, as several of his decrees clearly prove. Though he was guilty of many excesses, it must be confessed that those excesses were partly owing to the turbulent times in which he lived, since he may be said to have been obliged to hold his crown by means only of a continual struggle. His memory has been, upon the whole, treated with more severity than it really deserved.

A Legend of Don Pedro.

“ While fainting Virtue scarce maintain’d her ground,
He pours fresh forces in.”——

DRYDEN.

A Legend of Don Pedro.

IN the middle of a dark forest, and under the protection of its thick shade, two cavaliers, closely muffled, had taken refuge from the pelting of a most furious storm. Rain poured down in torrents, whilst the frequent sheets of sulphurous fire that broke at intervals through the gloom, and the awful roar of thunder which followed them, increased the terrors of the scene. Evening—a dull, cheerless evening, ushering in the still more cheerless night: the trees offered but an indifferent shelter from the raging fury of the elements—the cloaks of the strangers were already drenched—their spirits exhausted, and their horses jaded and worn down; the prospect, therefore, of being obliged to pass the night in that dreary situation, inspired them with the most melancholy reflections.

“Santiago protect us!” said one of the travellers; “but we are to expect a poor accommodation to-night. There is no probability of this storm abating, and, if we are to receive its favours here, why we might as well plunge into the Guadalquiver. We certainly could not undergo a more thorough drenching.”

“And what course can we adopt?” said the other.

“Why, my good Don Ferran, why not attempt to find some human dwelling, where we may recover our spirits, and pass a tolerable night? Surely we stand in good need of repose after the fatigue of the chase. A plague on the chase, and on the game that has brought me to this predicament! How the devil did those lazy dogs contrive to keep so far behind me?”

“My Liege,” said Ferran de Castro, “you must not expect all the Castilians to be such indefatigable hunters as their king, Don Pedro.”

“No, no,” answered the King, with a scornful smile; “they keep their exertions for better purposes; they don’t waste their strength and activity in the idle pursuit of the chase of animals, when they have far more noble game in view. No; my kind lords and good masters reserve their powers for the toils of treason and revolt.”

“Alas! Sir King, it grieves me to see you continually bent on that distressing theme.”

“Grammercy, most courteous Don Ferran de Castro,” returned the King, bantering, “but I apprehend, that the prospect of losing the crown of Castile is a subject well deserving the solicitude of the possessor. Well, well; at present I ought rather to think of a supper and a bed, than the affairs of the nation.”

“A most prudent idea; but methinks neither supper nor bed are likely to fall to the share of

the King of Castile, or his faithful knight, Ferran de Castro."

"Certainly," answered the King, "we are not to suppose that those blessings will unbidden come. — No; with the character that Don Pedro bears, it cannot be expected that a ministering angel will descend to prepare them for us. We must try and look for them ourselves. The rain, though quite enough still to drown any Christian, has abated a little; and a fear of spoiling our garments and gay plumes cannot now deter us from seeking out a night's lodging."

"I am ready to follow you, Don Pedro, only that one difficulty is yet to be ascertained."

"Ay, that we shall not mend our fortunes, but only exchange for the worse."

"No, no; that can hardly be possible."

"What then, good cavalier?"

"Nothing, my Liege, but the small consideration of our horses."

"Well, what of our horses? they are as good as—"

"I don't dispute their good qualities," interrupted Don Ferran; "but it strikes me that their present condition is not the most desirable to second our design. Poor animals," he added, patting his own on the mane, "I think we might as well attempt to carry them, as to pretend that they should bear us much longer. How pensive the poor beasts look!"

"By my troth, they do; but we must disturb

their meditations. I hate pensive moods ; they are ominous, and quite as much so in horses as in men. Now, let us try our fortune ; and, harkye, Ferran, should we be so happy as to find the shelter we earnestly desire, learn that I wish to keep a strict incognito ; you know this is a favourite whim of mine."

" My Liege, I shall take care to obey you."

The King of Castile and his attendant then prepared to quit their lonely station in search of better accommodation.

Whilst they were occupied in this pursuit, and coaxing their exhausted horses to proceed, they observed, at no great distance, a sequestered and peaceful habitation. It was the dwelling of Juan Pasqual, called the *Montanes*, an honest substantial farmer, renowned in all the district for his integrity and benevolence of heart. He was a man of the most upright principles, and dreading the civil war, which was beginning to desolate the kingdom, he studiously avoided every contact with the world, and led a more sequestered life than ever.

Juan Pasqual, in the company of his family, had just finished his evening orison, and was preparing to sit down to an abundant, though not very delicate supper.

" Now, my children, our duties for the day being performed, let us sit down quietly and enjoy our meal."

A fearful flash of lightning threw a terrific light

over the apartment, and a tremendous clap of thunder followed.

“What a dreadful night!” exclaimed one of his children; “it almost seems as if the end of the world were approaching.”

“Alack, for the poor benighted wanderer!” said the wife: “should darkness have surprised any stray wretch in these solitary places, to what a painful state must he be reduced!”

“Indeed,” resumed Pasqual, “the obscurity, unless when fitfully illumined by the lightning, is so intense, that, if any such sufferers are now wandering about the forest and its vicinity, they will not be able to find their way to any human habitation; but I do not suppose there can be any traveller, the storm having begun long before the close of day: however, we must do the duties incumbent on good Christians, by using all our endeavours to seek out distress, and relieve it. Now, my good Manuel,” he added, turning to his son, “let us light a large fire in front of the house, that may serve as a beacon to the forlorn wanderer; the rain has subsided: collect as much dry wood as will suffice; at all events, should we not be able to keep the flame alive, we shall sleep in the gratifying conviction that we have used our best endeavours in the promotion of humanity.”

This was no sooner said, than both father and son took from their stores a quantity of wood and dry furze, and, with great alacrity, proceeded to light

the cheering fire. Their kind intention, however, owing to the moisture of the ground, and the drizzling rain that fell, was not accomplished without some difficulty; but the perseverance of the humane farmers vanquished every obstacle, and a fire was at length kindled, so bright and high, that it could be easily discerned from a great distance. Having done this, with tranquil hearts, father and son entered their dwelling, and anxiously awaited their supper.

This soon smoked upon the table, and the whole family of Pasqual set to work with marvellous appetite. Now and then they cast a look towards the window, from which they could see the reflection of the fire; and the certainty that it burned well cheered their spirits, and gave a higher relish to their meal.

"There is no danger now," said Pasqual, "it will not be extinguished; the rain has no power over it, and the wind that is just risen will only serve to strengthen it."

"Hark!" said Manuel, after a pause, "hark! methinks I hear the tramp of horsemen in the distance."

"Thou hast a sharp ear, boy," replied Pasqual; "mine is not so faithful to its duty."

"List, list, father! Surely that is the tramp of horses' hoofs! No, I cannot be mistaken."

He rose and approached the door, the better to certain how far he was correct in his surmises;

his father followed his example, a short time after.

“Heaven be blessed!” exclaimed the father, “our precaution has been of much utility. I can now clearly perceive the noise of advancing horsemen; yet methinks it is very heavy and slow.”

“Ay, depend upon it, father,” said Manuel, “the sorry beasts are not in a fit state for showy galloping; ’tis all they can do, I trow, to crawl their way slowly as they may.”

“They approach nearer. Go, my good Manuel, go out and call to cheer them up.”

The son obeyed; and it was not long before two horsemen, almost sinking with exhaustion, arrived at the gate of the farm. Manuel aided them to dismount from their jaded steeds, and then, with the most cordial expressions, conducted them into the house.

“Welcome, cavaliers—thrice welcome to my dwelling,” said Juan Pasqual, with a benevolent countenance.

“Thank you, my brave master,” answered Don Pedro; for it was he and his companion, Don Ferran, who had arrived at the farm.

“Ay,” said the knight, “the fine blazing of thy fire gave sure indication of quite as warm a heart; and in sooth we are in good need of warmth, for we are perishing with the wet and cold: happily we are not subject to catarrhs.”

“Here is a cloak, now,” quoth the King, “the

weighs at least some hundred pounds weight. I am sure, that by the extraction of the water which it has imbibed, there would be enough to drown a moderate-sized brat."

Saying this, he cast aside the ponderous cloak, which fell on the floor with a sort of splashing sound.

"If you object not, cavaliers," said Pasqual, "my son and I can accommodate you with a suit which, however coarse, must be preferable to your drenched habiliments."

"Most prudently spoken," returned Don Pedro. "Object! Heaven bless the man—what possible objection can we have to so advantageous a barter?—And with regard to the coarseness of the habit, think you we feel apprehensive for our most delicate and lady-like skin? No! Heaven preserve me from such effeminacy; this at least comes not into my catalogue of faults. No, the noble Castilian knight you see here, and the ——"

He suddenly checked himself in the disclosure he was about to make. Ferran came to his assistance.

"Thy offer is most gratefully accepted, my kind host," he said.

"And may I, without indiscretion," quoth Pasqual, "put a question to my guests?"

"As many as you wish, good master," answered the King.

"By the appearance of your habiliments, though so much soiled by dirt and rain, I apprehend that

no common individuals honour my humble home with their company to-night ?”

“ Mayhap,” said the King, “ thou art not far from the mark. What dost thou account us to be ?”

“ Why, my honoured cavaliers, you must belong to the court.”

“ We do, truly,” answered the King ; “ indeed, we may almost assert that we are not the most unimportant persons at the Alcazar of Seville. May we now, in turn, ask to whom we are obliged for this unexpected hospitality ?”

“ My name is Juan Pasqual.”

“ Juan Pasqual !” echoed the King ; “ is it the Juan Pasqual that is called the Mountaineer ?”

“ The same, sir ; but I should scarcely have imagined that my humble name could be acknowledged by courtiers.”

“ Thank Heaven,” said Don Pedro, pleased, “ that this opportunity offers itself for my becoming acquainted with an individual so celebrated for his honest integrity ! Why, Master Pasqual, thy name is rightly esteemed at the Alcazar, however retired the life you lead. Indeed, worth is not so common in Castile that its existence should be unknown for any length of time. And now let us sit down to supper, for I feel a most ravenous appetite.”

The King and his companion did ample justice to the homely fare of Juan Pasqual. They soon forgot their unpleasant adventure, in the enjoy—

ment of the cheering fire, and the social conduct of their host.

“ We were mentioning the Alcazar of Seville,” said the King: “ have you ever been there, my good master ?”

“ Never: Heaven preserve me!” answered Juan Pasqual.

“ And why invoke that protection on such an occasion ?”

“ Alack, sir, I have no desire to come near Seville, much less to be involved, for a single moment, in the miseries of its court; I value my peace of mind too much.”

“ There it is!” said the King, “ the old song, as I am a Christian knight! Country people will always launch forth against the court and its deceits; every thing that is bad is included in the word —”

“ Nay, my honoured cavalier,” replied Juan Pasqual, “ I did not mean to offend; but surely we must allow, that Seville is not such a desirable place to select for a residence. What with the broils occasioned by the disaffected nobles, who have risen in arms against the King, and the errors of the King ——”

“ Forbear, my good friend,” interrupted Ferran de Castro; “ you certainly forget that we belong to the court, and that your words might come to the hearing of the King.”

“ I never utter things lightly,” answered Pasqual, firmly; “ but when I do once utter them, I

can boast it is no easy matter to make me unsay them. Should occasion offer itself, I should feel neither dread nor disinclination to speak my sentiments, even before the King himself. Ay, even the violence of his temper, which they say is excessive, should not deter me from acting according to the dictates of conscience!"

"By my troth, thou art a bold man," said the King.

"No, sir, I am an honest man ; and that is something stronger."

"So things do not go as they ought, according to your opinion, honest Juan Pasqual?" observed Don Pedro.

"Heaven defend us!" exclaimed the farmer ; "how should they, when I know that crime is committed there with the greatest impunity?"

"Impunity!" echoed the King, somewhat moved ; "methinks thou art misinformed in that respect. I am aware that when crime is detected, it meets with its due punishment."

"Ay, I question not that the King, though having faults enough, as they say, the Lord preserve him ! is a strict lover of justice, and seldom lets a criminal escape without his reward. But my complaint is certainly great against the *Primer Asistente*, and other authorities at Seville, for their negligence in not checking the fearful progress which crime is now making. Holy Virgin ! why, there is scarcely a single night in which a homi-

cide is not committed. Now, if the magistrates did their duty, I apprehend many of these dreadful deeds might be prevented."

"Alas! Master Pasqual," said the King, "it is so very easy to find fault with those in power, but so difficult to avoid their sins of omission, which we so abundantly criticise, when we are ourselves transplanted to their situation."

"That I admit," replied Pasqual, with a benignant smile; "men in general are more fit for preachers than to be observers of any sound doctrine which they may happen to inculcate; yet, making the most liberal allowances for this weakness of human nature, I must still say that the magistrates of Seville are acting a most shameful part, for they might prevent half of the crimes committed, if they had the bold courage and stern love of duty which are necessary towards the awful functions of justice. But they sin wilfully; they are cowards; yes, my good cavaliers! they are most detestable cowards, for it is to keep in friendly terms with the *grandees* that they make a compromise of their character."

"To keep in friendly terms with the *grandees*!" exclaimed Ferran de Castro; "how make you that out, Master Pasqual?"

"Easily enough, gentle sir," returned Pasqual: "though living in seclusion, and entirely devoted to my country pursuits, I am not so ignorant of what is passing at Seville, as not to know that half of the homicides perpetrated at night, spring from a taste

for gallantry and intrigue, which the King himself, and some of his courtiers, have brought into fashion. The most scandalous scenes are acted ; husbands, brothers, guardians, are not safe in their own houses : the mischief is done, and the guilty always take good care to assume disguises in order to escape detection. The King, Don Pedro, as I have said before, is known to be remarkably fond of such nocturnal adventures, and I have been often assured that he strolls along the streets of his own capital in disguises totally unworthy of his exalted station."

"You surely have been deceived, Master Pasqual," said Ferran de Castro, alarmed lest the indiscretion of the honest farmer should bring the anger of the King upon his head.

"Would to God I were ! But things prove that there is no exaggeration in what I advance."

"I should like to see you made *Primer Asistente* of Seville," said the King, smiling. "Affairs would no doubt proceed then upon a very different footing."

"Heaven preserve me from so responsible a situation!" replied Pasqual. "But yet think not, Sir Courtier, that if I were once obliged to exert the sacred functions incumbent on the *Asistente*, I should flinch from the execution of my duty, however circumvented with toil and danger."

By this time the supper being ended, the King and his companion, who were in much want of repose, retired to the beds prepared for them. The independent character of Juan Pasqual had pleased

Don Pedro, however galling some of the opinions expressed by the farmer might be to the pride of a despotic king. Ferran, who saw him plunged in profound reverie, began to apprehend that their hospitable host had fallen under Don Pedro's displeasure ; and that the speculations which occupied the mind of the latter at present were of an unfavourable nature. Under this impression, and sorry that the worthy farmer should suffer from the effects of his integrity and ignorance, the noble Castilian ventured to observe—

“ This Juan Pasqual is a very honest man.”

“ Very,” answered the King.

“ Though, certainly, he does not appear to have the most correct information.”

“ On the contrary ; he is most intimately acquainted with what is going forward at Seville.”

“ I regret, however, that his ignorance of the dignity of one of his guests should have led him to commit himself in so manifest a manner.”

“ My good Don Ferran,” answered the King, smiling, “ I am better pleased than ever, that I should have adopted the incognito.”

“ But then the unguarded expressions of Pasqual?”

“ I like them the better for being unguarded—they are sincere ; which I marvel if they would have been, despite of the farmer's blazoned integrity, had he known the real characters of his guests.”

There was a pause—the King seemed to have discovered the tendency of his companion's thoughts, and, in a good-humoured tone, continued—

“ I can easily foresee the motives by which you are actuated, Ferran, in speaking in this circumlocutory manner. You apprehend the effects of my indignation ; for, naturally enough, you suppose that disagreeable truth is a bitter draught to every one, and much more so to those who consider themselves far above its reach ; but rest assured, that no ill result shall accrue to Juan Pasqual for the bold declaration of his sentiments. The thoughts that engaged my mind, just now, were of a very opposite nature. And now, good night, Sir Castilian ; for we must depart betimes on the morrow to the Alcazar—fair dreams to thee !”

Shortly after they had withdrawn for the night, Pasqual called his ideas to counsel on the subject of his guests. His dame expressed her fears that he had been too open and sincere in his words, and that the courtiers might make a merit of bearing the tale to Don Pedro. Indeed, these alarming suspicions were confirmed, when, on the following morning, the King, in taking leave of his host, said, in a significant manner—

“ Fare thee well, good Pasqual ! be assured that you shall hear from me again, and also see me soon—sooner, perhaps, than you expect.”

“ I shall always be glad,” answered the farmer, “ to bestow my humble services on you, or any other cavalier. God bless you ! a pleasant journey to Seville.”

As soon as the two strangers had departed, Pasqual's helpmate, with all the nervous sensitiveness

of her sex, began to read the peaceful farmer a lecture on the virtue of prudence—a virtue which indeed, in her opinion, her dear man was deplorably deficient in.

“There—a fine work you have made of it, Pasqual!” quoth Dame Juana, putting her arms akimbo, and looking the object of her apostrophe dismally in the face: “there! as sure as I am a virtuous woman, will those smart springalds run full-mouthed with the story to the King. Our Lady defend us in her mercy! What may come from this, Heaven knows; but it is no fortune to us, I trow. Oh! Pasqual, why cannot you keep that unlucky tongue from wagging, at least before strangers?”

“Bless the dame!” quoth Pasqual in a good-natured tone, “what would you have? I suppose you think that I am trespassing on your privileges.”

“A plague on thy merriment!” answered Juana, angrily; “’tis well to put a laughing face on the affair, when we know we have been playing the fool. Thou art a sorry man, Pasqual; and the worst is, thou wilt never be taught better.”

“Ay, ay, that is sure enough, if thou art my instructor, dear. Why, if I had committed treason, thou couldst not appear more alarmed.”

“Well, and hast thou not committed treason? Have you not said very unpleasant things concerning the King and the courtiers, and the magistrates, and all the great people of Seville? and is

not that treason? Ay, the most confirmed treason an humble farmer can be guilty of!"

"Treason! The Lord defend the woman! how make you that out, Juana? Have I said aught but the truth?"

"Well, and is not the truth treason? Yes, it is, when great people are not pleasantly handled by means of the truth; in that case, alack! the greater the truth, the greater the treason. It requires no ghostly admonition to tell us that: but thou, Pasqual, thinkest that all will go right, if so be that a man is honest and pays his debts, and goes to mass and confession, and pays the tithes, and takes off his hat to lords and ladies, and priests and friars, and alguazils. But no such thing: a man may do all this, and be honest into the bargain, and yet speak treason; and time will show whether or no this mishap comes not over your wise head — time will show."

"Well, well; but in the mean time, good Juana, keep thy eloquence in reserve. I see no reason why I should be favoured with it by anticipation."

"Thou wretched man!" she continued, in the same strain, "what is it to you, whether the King likes to run about the streets in a disguise, be that the disguise of a devil or any other? And what matters it whether a man is killed every night as long as you are not the assassin? What are the affairs of the state to you? Why do you not mind your cows and your crops, your fruits and your

pasturages, and let other folks do as they will? But, sorrow to me, you will never be advised!"

Dame Juana gave signs of being in a most apt mood to expatiate on the subject. She evinced very capable powers of tongue, and her husband, perceiving that the lecture might be longer than he chose to receive, instead of brunting its terrors, or endeavouring to repel them, took that course which every prudent husband takes on similar occasions: he sounded a retreat, and left the oratorical dame to hold forth at leisure to the furniture.

But the awful predictions of the dame were not destitute of foundation — at least the event seemed to verify her apprehensions. A few days after the above took place, there came a messenger to Pasqual's dwelling, who announced himself as being the bearer of very important intelligence from Seville. Pasqual was at the time surveying his fields, and deeply occupied in his usual avocations; his dear wife had thus to receive the messenger, and entertain him until her husband's return. It would not be just to libel Dame Juana so far as to deny that she was wanting in the usual attributes of her sex, and, therefore, like a good woman as she was, she now felt a most tantalizing curiosity to ascertain the nature of the intelligence brought by the stranger.

"Well, kind sir," she said, after having treated her guest to some racy wine, "and may I presume to inquire into the purport of your business with my good man?"

“Why, I believe it is no secret — I am come to conduct Juan Pasqual to Seville.”

“The Lord defend us!” ejaculated the dame.
“And what is he to do there?”

“That the King will decide.”

“The King! the King! — What mean you, sir?”

“The King knows best what he is to do with him.”

“To do with him? — Holy Virgin! here are fine words to use: why, surely they don’t mean to kill the poor man?”

“Peace, good woman!” said the messenger, with a smile.

“But I am not a good woman. No, sir, I am a very dragon, a most terrible serpent, when I am incensed; and if my husband, like a fool as he is, has been guilty of some imprudence, we are to thank his ignorance, and not his heart, for a better one there does not exist in Castile, — that is to say, according to my ideas; for I would not presume to decide of the hearts of the King and other great folks, my betters; of course, with such hearts as those I have no manner of business, though I religiously believe they are such as the possessors wish them to be. But with regard to the quandary into which my poor man has got himself by his excessive love of talking, I do verily maintain it would be cruel to ——”

“By my troth,” interrupted the messenger, “I really believe the woman is mad.”

“No, sir ; I am in my right senses, and that’s more than every one can say. Juan Pasqual is not a traitor !”

“Here’s a breeze ! Who, in the name of Satan, said that he was ?”

“Why, you said as much.”

“I never opened my lips on the subject, nor would care to do it, if I had to discuss the point with such an one as you.”

Dame Juana was getting warm and proportionately eloquent, or, what is equivalent, loquacious, and her fated listener was every moment more perplexed and more out of humour, when, fortunately, Juan Pasqual arrived to receive upon his own head that tempest of words which had almost overpowered the previous victim.

“Lack-a-day !” began Juana, as soon as she perceived the farmer, “I thought it would come to this. Come hither, Pasqual, come hither, and see the fine pass to which your loquacity has brought you and your poor family. You are summoned to appear before the King, to answer the charge of treason. There, remember I predicted all this ! Now, you will pay some attention to what your wife says ; and it would be a wholesome practice if husbands could be persuaded to do so a little oftener.”

Juan Pasqual was somewhat surprised at the awful announcement of his helpmate ; the charge of treason sounded terribly in his ear, but he was

disposed to make some allowance for the fears of Juana, and accordingly proceeded to question the messenger. To obtain, however, a clear view of the subject, was no easy matter, so long as the dame was allowed the free use of her tongue. Pasqual, therefore, drew the man aside, and was informed respecting the object of his mission. Nothing indicative of ill, however, was to be surmised from the words of the messenger ; and the mountaineer, confiding in his own innocence, prepared to follow him to Seville, without betraying the smallest symptoms of fear or alarm.

The lamentable exclamations of his wife were loud and many. She at first resolved to accompany her husband, but the interests of the family required her remaining at the farm. It was, however, with great difficulty that Juan Pasqual succeeded in calming her restless and alarmed spirit ; till, promising that, upon his arrival at court, he should give immediate notice to her of everything that might happen, the honest countryman at last released himself, and, mounting one of his mules, took his course towards Seville. Upon his entering the city, there were some men waiting for him, who, without loss of time, conducted him to the Alcazar. Juan Pasqual was not without apprehension when he perceived the strange direction which affairs were taking. There was an air of mystery in the whole proceeding not entirely reassuring ; but yet, with a bold demeanour and fear-

less heart, he went on, confiding in his innocence. On his arrival at the Alcazar, he was shown into a magnificent apartment, where he was ordered to wait. After a short time, a private door opened, and, to his surprise, one of his guests made his appearance, instead of the King, whom he expected. But the person that stood before him was in reality the King; who, with a serious but not hostile tone of voice, proceeded to address the new-comer.

“Juan Pasqual,” he said, “upon my taking leave of you, you may remember that I promised you should see me soon?”

“I do remember.”

“Behold my promise fulfilled. You may also recollect the conversation that passed between us at supper?”

“I do,” answered Juan Pasqual, firmly.

“And how unsparing thou wert of thy rebukes towards a certain neglect of duty which called forth thy zeal and indignation?”

“Nothing of what was spoken is obliterated from my memory.”

“The King is acquainted with the whole conversation.”

“I am very sorry for that,” replied Pasqual: “not because of any fear on my part for having uttered aught that an honest man needs be ashamed to confess, nor because of the consequence which my sincerity may entail upon me; but because I cannot think so well as before of cavaliers who

repay the hospitality they receive at my house, by officiously divulging what passed in private converse."

"Such conduct," said the King, "would indeed be cowardly; but nothing of the kind has taken place."

"This is an enigma I cannot understand."

"Its solution is not difficult: one of your guests was Don Pedro himself."

"Can it be possible!—Then your companion was the King?"

"No," answered Don Pedro, smiling: "I am the King."

Juan Pasqual now respectfully bent his knee to kiss the King's hand; after which he stood collected and composed, awaiting Don Pedro's intentions.

"Yes," he continued, "I am the King of Castile, and, according to the general estimation, the cruel, the tyrannical Don Pedro. Now, art thou not afraid of standing in my presence?"

"No, my Liege," respectfully, but dauntlessly, replied the farmer: "I am not conscious of having done aught to fear evil."

"So, thou wouldst still maintain the opinions thou didst so bluntly express on that occasion?"

"I would, my Liege"

"Be guarded in what you say."

"I say it, my Liege, with the knowledge of the responsibility I draw upon myself."

"You still think that many of the riots and

crimes committed nightly at Seville might be prevented?"

"Yes, my Lord King, such is my earnest conviction."

"And it is also thy conviction, that the civil authorities are neglectful of their duty?"

"Yes, my Liege."

"By my troth, thou art a right hardy man: what if I were to put thee in such a situation as would render the acknowledgment of those sentiments extremely awkward?"

"I should maintain them in any situation."

"Even if by any possible chance thou wert to be invested with the office of *Primer Asistente* of Seville?"

"Such a possibility is indeed remote; but if such were the case, that could not alter my opinions."

"'Tis well. Then thou wouldst abide by thy duty with an unflinching sternness?"

"I would."

"Even if that duty should come in disagreeable contact with powerful personages?"

"Yes, my Liege," replied Pasqual, with the same firmness.

"Even," said Don Pedro, in a more solemn tone, "even if the offender happened to be the King?"

"Even then," undauntedly returned the farmer.

"'Tis well, Pasqual; give me thy hand."

"My Liege—I——"

"Give me thy hand, I say: by my honour, thou

art the first man in Castile who hath dared to speak in this manner to Don Pedro, and that is no small merit. I see thou art as brave as thou art honest. And now prepare to put in practice the bold sentiments thou hast announced."

"My King! what means your highness?"

"I mean, that thou shalt have it in thy power to provide a remedy for the evils thou hast denounced."

"I cannot yet comprehend."

"From this moment I name thee *Primer Asistente* of Seville. Nay, look not amazed; the thing must be!"

"But, my honoured Liege, consider my humble station in life—the want of the proper requisites."

"What requisites?—hast thou not integrity?"

"I have, by the mercy of God."

"And courage strictly to obey the dictates of that integrity?"

"Yes, my Liege; but yet——"

"Enough—it is decided; and say not a single word more, or thou will give me reason to suppose that thou art an idle boaster, who skulks away when the moment of danger is arrived."

"No, God forbid that my King should have a just reason to entertain that opinion, through any fault of mine!"

"Then prepare to obey my orders: from this day the supreme judiciary power rests upon thy shoulders."

Shortly after, various civil officers entered the place, and Juan Pasqual was introduced to the *Veintiquatros** of Seville, as the future *Asistente*; the vara, or wand of office, was delivered to him, and every ceremony of his installation duly performed. The new judge was well aware of the awful responsibility which the King had compelled him to take upon himself; he felt some inward misgivings at the difficulties and dangers of his new situation, and a sigh of regret escaped him when he reflected that he was now to forego the peace and happiness of his rural life for all the troubles and anxieties of a public station.

At the time that Juan Pasqual was invested with the wand of office, the city of Seville, owing to various causes, was plunged into a state of profligacy and confusion. The greatest excesses were continually alarming the peace of the orderly citizens; but at night the scandal rose to a degree of fearful lawlessness. A love of nocturnal adventure was prevalent amongst the nobles, who, under the most unseemly disguises, were constantly engaged in broils and disorders of every description. To curb this licentious spirit was not a task of easy fulfilment. The cruel deeds of Don Pedro had, besides, accustomed the people in some measure to look upon a homicide as a comparatively

* A court of judicial functionaries, resembling the Court of Aldermen: they were twenty-four in number, whence they derived their name.

slight calamity ; the immediate friends only of the deceased took any interest in the event, while the public at large was familiarized to the crime by its frequency.

Juan Pasqual, without delay, adopted the most efficacious measures to check such appalling evils. He knew that, for the successful attainment of his object, it was indispensable to surround himself with proper agents, on whose integrity he could confide, and whose powers of execution were equal to their moral rectitude. For this purpose, without paying attention to the murmurs of discontent, he dismissed many of the alguazils, and other subalterns, and had their places occupied by persons entirely deserving of the trust. Instead of the slender and inefficient patrol which rambled drowsily about the streets of Seville, he instituted a body of armed men, whom he distributed at certain distances, with strict orders not to let any one remain at rest in the open streets after a certain hour at night. These guards he took care to have handsomely remunerated for their laborious duties ; and by these means, and by being himself continually on the alert, he hoped, if not totally to eradicate the firmly-rooted evil, at least to lessen the misfortunes with which it was attended.

But few days had elapsed since Juan Pasqual had been appointed to his dignified station, when the fruits of his vigilance were clearly discernible. He had arrested several individuals, amongst others

Don Juan de Valverde, a nobleman of considerable influence, and who, upon his being fully convicted of assassination, was, together with his accomplices, immediately ordered out for execution. The vigilance and sternness of the new *Asistente* began to make the lovers of riot more wary in their proceedings, and the instances of violence and tumult were, by this means, considerably lessened. Still, though the exertions of Juan Pasqual had been attended with beneficial results, much remained to be done ere he could congratulate himself on the complete success which was to recompense his labours. An adventure happened some time after, which called for the exertion of all his power, and subjected his integrity to the severest trial.

It was in the dead of a dark night, that a cavalier, closely muffled up, was seen patrolling a sequestered and suspicious street of Seville; the guard of that street had as yet forborne accosting the stranger, as he had kept walking, was totally unaccompanied, and had not the appearance of pre-meditating any scene of riot. At length, however, he knocked several times at the door of a house: his appeal was not answered; he repeated it, but with the same ill success.

“Curse on the fool!” muttered he, impatiently; “what new whims can have taken possession of her?”

He knocked again louder, when a low window was opened, and a person protruded her head.

“Begone, sir, and molest no longer the house of an honourable woman! Begone, lest I summon the guard.”

“Dost thou know who I am?”

“I care not who you may be! I only desire you to go away in peace. If you proceed in your disturbance, I shall alarm the neighbourhood. The young woman whom you seek is no longer here: to avoid your persecutions, she has taken flight, and put herself under the protection——”

“Of whom?” inquired the stranger, anxiously.

“Why,” said the other, a female, “I fear not to tell you; for sure am I, thou canst not attempt aught against her honour now. She is under the protection of her own brother, the powerful Don Ferran de Castro: surely he will check your audacity, since a poor old aunt cannot.”

So saying, the aunt shut the window, leaving the nocturnal adventurer without knowing what course to adopt. But his doubtful mood was soon brought to a termination: the guard of the street came up to him, and, with a gentle but steady tone of voice, desired him to leave the house.

“Who art thou, scoundrel?” cried the stranger fiercely: “I shall not stir from this place.”

“You must, sir: compel me not to employ any violent means.”

“Violent means! God save the mark! What ruffian art thou, to hold such language to me? Begone! or——”

“No, ’tis you that must begone, and that speedily too. In the king’s name, I charge you to remove from this place—or remain in it at your peril!”

“And, in the King’s name, I shall not stir! So, my brave knight of the pike, do thy worst.”

“Again I request you to depart.”

“And again I advise thee not to meddle with me;—I may be more powerful than thou art aware of.”

“Thy power I heed not: I am placed here by supreme authority; so now, for the last time, I summon you to quit this place, to surrender, or look upon thy death!”

“Wretch, forbear!” furiously cried the stranger; and, as he spoke, he laid hold of his weapon. The guard then advanced to attack his adversary, and a bravely-contested engagement ensued. The street was completely deserted, and the darkness so great that objects could not easily be distinguished. At the noise, however, of arms, a little window was cautiously opened, just opposite to the place of battle, and an old woman, holding a glimmering *candil*,* stretched out her head.

“Holy St. Joseph and the Virgin defend us!”

* An iron lamp, of a peculiar construction, used in Spain.

muttered she in a low tone, and fervently crossing herself, "there will be murder here, as sure as I am a sinner. But, let me see, methinks I recognise the muffled cavalier — yet surely it is not he — the darkness prevents me from — but, O Lord! how they both fight! — Help! — help!"

By this time the official of justice had been overpowered, and his antagonist had buried his weapon in the unfortunate man's body, which fell heavily on the ground.

"Help! — murder!" vociferated the old woman.

"Curse on the hag!" said the assassin, "she will alarm the parish, and I shall have a whole set of rascally burghers after me: the most prudent thing is to decamp in time — the darkness will protect my flight."

So saying, he commenced a speedy retreat, and, despite of the old woman's clamour, escaped detection. By this time several of the neighbours had begun to assemble on the spot in the greatest alarm, and the place was soon filled with people.

"There is the dead man," cried the old hag at the window — "ay, I suppose he is dead, — but the homicide has escaped."

"The Lord defend us!" exclaimed one in horror, "sure enough Mother Tomasa does not deceive us. She has clamoured with some reason, for here is a dead man, as I am a Christian and a cobbler."

"Perhaps he breathes yet," observed another.

“Alack! he is as dead as my grandmother—feel how cold and stiff the poor fellow is!”

“Mercy on our sins!” cried the brother of the strap; “and see what a prodigious gaping wound they have made on him!—why, I might run my fist through it, and my hand is none of the slimmest neither. Well, Heaven forgive his sins! And now let us carry him hence.”

Next day, Juan Pasqual devoted himself with great zeal to investigate this melancholy case; but for some time he could not gather the least glimpse which might serve him as a clue to unravel the mysterious affair. All that could be ascertained was, that a man had been found murdered in the street; but who the perpetrator of the crime was, or how the deed had been committed, remained involved in the deepest obscurity. The *Asistente* was not, however, easily to be discouraged—the act was of so dark a nature that it called for more than usual exertions. A close examination was made of all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood where the murder had been perpetrated. Some knew nothing of the affair until the morning after the occurrence,—others had heard a groan,—others, a noise and scuffle; but their ears were so accustomed to such noises, that they did not suffer them to disturb their repose. At length, the old woman of the *candil* came forward, and announced that she might perhaps throw some light on the subject.

“Well, honest dame,” said Juan Pasqual, “what do you know of this atrocious deed?”

“Please your honour, I had just finished my prayers—for it was late, very late, your honour must know, and so I thought I might as well go to bed; therefore——”

“Never mind all that; let us come to the point.”

“The Lord bless you, sir, and to the point I intend to come; but surely there is no coming without going, and if you permit me not to go on with my story, I don’t see how I can give you any information concerning this same cruel murder.”

“Well, proceed; but, in justice, be more sparing of digressions.”

“That is, sir, what I intend all along, Heaven bless you! Well, as I was saying, I was saying to myself, I think I might go to bed, and so I was going to bed, when I thought I heard some noise in the streets; and whenever there is a noise in the street, I always make it a point to look and see what that same noise may be about; for it is by this means that I have often found out many things that had puzzled others. Well, I cautiously opened the window, and, as sure as I am an honest woman, I saw two men fighting; and then I saw one of them fall; and then I saw the other run away.”

“And did you recognise the fugitive?”

“I would not swear positively, because, you know, that taking a false oath is no light affair; but yet, I think the stature, the tone of voice, the fierce demeanour, and the noise which his legs made, besides my having known the same person to frequent that street—all this gives me strong suspicions that the man is not totally unknown to me.”

“Indeed! and who is he? Speak boldly and plainly, in the name of God, I charge thee! Who is this criminal?”

“Nay, sir, mayhap there may be great danger in disclosing his name, and therefore——”

“Peace, woman!” interrupted Juan Pasqual; “thou must declare the name of the delinquent — thou art bound so to do by all the most sacred laws, divine and human.”

“Ay, that’s easily said; but suppose my declaration should bring my poor self into a strange quandary? For I tell you again, sir, that it is a powerful person whom I suspect; besides, I may be wrong in my conjectures, and this, you know, most worthy *Asistente*, is a very delicate point.”

“Enough, woman! give up the name of the person on whom thy suspicion falls, ere you compel me to use any violent measures to oblige you to do as you are required.”

“Well, the Lord help me! what troubles I have brought on my head only for looking out at the

window ! Now, Señor *Asistente*, will you protect me if I speak truth ?”

“ Yes ; the law shall afford thee all possible protection.”

“ Well, then,” continued she, after some hesitation, “ the man whom I suspect of this murder—suspect, I say, not accuse, is the King !”

“ The King !” exclaimed several voices in amazement.

Surprise and alarm filled the whole court where this judicial proceeding was carried on. Juan Pasqual uttered a groan of regret, but suddenly recovering his composure, now felt all the miseries of his station, and that the moment was arrived to put in practice those severe virtues in which he had felt himself strong until this fatal event. He ordered all the *Veintiquatros* and other attendants to leave the place, and remaining alone with the old woman and a civil officer, he sent a message to the King, requesting his immediate attendance at his tribunal.

Don Pedro was not a little amazed at the novelty of such a proceeding. He at first imagined that Juan Pasqual was crazy. If the *Asistente* had any intelligence to communicate to the King, surely it was more in the order of things that he should come to the Alcazar, than that the sovereign of Castile should go to the *Asistente*.

“ By my troth !” cried Don Pedro, with a sardonic smile, “ the man is ten times stouter than I sup-

posed him : why, he is downright fool-hardy, or mad, I know not which. I marvel at his folly in daring to send such a message ; what can he want with me ? But I'll humour him."

The King repaired to the court of the *Primer Asistente*. He found the head magistrate in a very thoughtful reverie — a reverie which was scarcely disturbed by the appearance of the King, for he only acknowledged it by a slight inclination of the head. Don Pedro was more and more puzzled every moment.

"Well, Sir *Asistente*," he said, "what may be your good pleasure with us ? You see that the King of Castile has been ready enough to obey your summons, though I think a little more discretion and courtesy on your part would not have been amiss."

"This is no time for courtesy, Don Pedro," gravely answered Juan Pasqual. "I have acted as it behoved my character and station, nor do I consider myself open to just reproach."

"Thy assurance is great," said the King, rather piqued : "why, you seem to forget what is due to the King of Castile."

"No, Don Pedro, God forefend I should so far be unmindful of my duty ! It is by the express command of the King of Castile that I hold this wand of office ; and whilst it is in my possession, I am determined not to disgrace it by pusillanimity or base subserviency. By virtue of this wand,

then, you stand before me, Don Pedro, not as the King of Castile, but as a suspected criminal—a man deeply attainted with the charge of murder ! It is to repel that charge that you are called into this court.”

The manly tone and resolute manner in which these words were delivered, awed the King, fierce and uncontrollable as was his temper. The fearless integrity of the farmer drew from him the meed which virtue exacts even from those who profess themselves its enemies.

“ And who hath the boldness,” said Don Pedro, “ to accuse the King of this flagrant deed ? ”

“ There are strong suspicions against you : this good woman entertains a deep persuasion that she recognized you, and——”

“ Curse the hag ! ” cried the King ; “ I suppose it is the same old crone that alarmed the neighbourhood with her discordant cries ; never had I so narrow an escape.”

“ Then you confess the deed ? ”

“ Yes ! ” resolutely replied the King.

“ Deeply do I regret, then, that Don Pedro should make so light of a heinous murder.”

“ Softly, Sir *Asistente*, softly there. I deny the charge of murder ; nor do I applaud the imprudent zeal that prompts you to pronounce such a word : I am no murderer—I killed the man in lawful and honourable defence.”

“ Nay, Don Pedro,” interrupted Juan Pasqual,

with unflinching sternness, "the man you slew was an agent of justice, and the guilt is thereby doubled. It was in the sacred discharge of his duty that he met his death "

"But, mayhap," said the King, "his zeal carried him beyond the limits of common prudence."

"The law knows no distinctions," firmly returned the *Asistente*. "By your own confession, Don Pedro, you stand convicted of murder!"

"Murder! — thou liest, base churl!" haughtily exclaimed the King. "I have told thee that I acted in self-defence: the imprudent man, though I forewarned him of his peril, attacked me, and he fell beneath my strength and skill in loyal and fair combat."

"At his command you ought to have retreated, instead of meeting his order by open violence. The terrible anger which agitates your bosom, Don Pedro, shall have no ascendancy over my functions. I will, as in duty bound, speak in defence of the law: if my integrity offends you, you have the power to inflict death upon me; but a fear of that death shall not deter me from the bold and clear manifestation of truth."

Don Pedro gazed in astonishment at Juan Pasqual, and in the determined expression of his countenance he well saw that they were no idle words which he was pronouncing, but that he would undergo any doom with constancy and intrepidity. After a pause, the *Asistente* continued—

“The circumstances under which the act was committed, and your being really engaged in a combat, may lessen your guilt, but cannot completely remove it. You knew that you were violently opposing the exercise of lawfully constituted authority, and your dignity could afford no plea in vindication. No, Don Pedro ; for that exalted rank should have told you, that you ought to be the first to contribute to the good maintainment of the law, instead of becoming its open violator. Now, lend attention to my decree: To-morrow, at the hour of noon, I summon thee, Don Pedro of Castile, to appear in the very spot where the homicide was committed, and there be ready to undergo the sentence which justice may think fit to pronounce. As thou hopest in the mercies of God, I charge thee not to disobey my summons, but to attend there with those feelings which ought always to accompany the guilty.”

Having pronounced these words in a solemn tone of voice, he waved his hand to the King, in token that he might retire, after which he himself withdrew slowly from the place.

Don Pedro could scarcely credit the reality of the scene to which he had been a witness. He could never have conceived any man rash enough to conduct himself in this manner towards the King of Castile. He felt much humiliated, and for some time entertained thoughts of punishment, for what he considered an instance of unparalleled insolence ;

but a more mature reflection awoke in his mind sentiments of a very different description. Don Pedro, a bold man himself, and a lover of justice, could not, after the first feelings of surprise and indignation had subsided, but look with respect on the noble conduct of Juan Pasqual. There was something so uncommon and daring in it, that it commanded admiration, even where it had excited anger and humiliation. Thus, after the King had deliberated the matter, he came at length to a determination of obeying the summons of the *Asistente*, and presenting himself, with all the insignia of his dignity, in the appointed place.

Many motives induced him to adopt this course : he was eager to know how Juan Pasqual would conduct himself on the occasion ; and, besides, a generous impulse of magnanimity told him that, by undergoing any humiliation in his own person, he would afford to his subjects a striking proof of his love for justice—a conviction which it was politic to inculcate. Thus, having fully made up his mind, he communicated his design to Ferran de Castro and other noble Castilians whom he wished to accompany him on the occasion.

Meantime the news of the extraordinary trial of the King had spread through Seville, and become the subject of general conversation. Every one was astonished at so singular and bold a proceeding, the more so as it was well known how impatient Don Pedro was of any control. Curiosity was

strongly excited by the summons signified to the King by the *Asistente*. It was a prevalent opinion that the sovereign of Castile would treat the affair with contempt; or, if he did at all attend, that it would be to punish the temerity of Juan Pasqual. Accordingly, this upright man became an object of pity and regret with the generality of the people. They considered him as a victim devoted to the vengeance of Don Pedro, and, whilst they applauded the courageous rectitude which had brought him to the present dilemma, they lamented that the farmer-judge should fall a sacrifice to his unbending integrity. Others, but they constituted the minority, could not entertain the thought that the King would visit his wrath on the *Asistente*, for the faithful discharge of his functions. Thus the whole of the population were occupied with the momentous event, and anxious for the morning that was to terminate the affair, as well as put an end to their surmises.

Whilst these various speculations engaged the minds of the public, Juan Pasqual, totally regardless of the fears expressed, or the storm that he was conjuring over his head, continued his preparations for the event which occupied his mind. He issued orders to the court of the *Veintiquatros* to hold themselves in readiness against the morrow, when they were to assemble, and proceed with him to the spot where the homicide had been committed.

The morning came, and the anxious inhabitants,

at a very early hour, began to congregate, in front of the mansion of the *Asistente*, which was also the palace of justice: the crowd increased every moment; a confused murmur arose, and, to maintain order, it was necessary to have a considerable force under arms. The noise of the excited multitude reached the Alcazar, where the King was awaiting the hour for attending the summons of the *Asistente*. He was in the company of Ferran de Castro, and several other nobles, who all gave unequivocal signs of their astonishment.

“There!” said Don Pedro, smiling, “my noble sirs, do ye hear that clamouring? God bless my loyal subjects! How eager they are for anything in the shape of a commotion. I marvel what ingenious device the good *Asistente* has prepared for our amusement. I am anxious to know myself, and therefore can easily excuse the impatience of the public.”

“And doth my Liege indeed intend to obey the impertinent summons of this Juan Pasqual?” said Padilla, who, being the brother of the celebrated Marien, enjoyed much familiarity with the King.

“Yes, I do,” answered Don Pedro, “and you must all accompany me: and, hark ye, take care that any injudicious zeal to oblige me prompts you not to do aught against the *Asistente*; he holds the wand of justice, and his person must be sacred. Any injury done to him, will be answerable to the King; therefore, keep a strict guard on yourselves, my good cavaliers.”

“ This is establishing a dangerous precedent, my Liege,” said Padilla. “ If the crown be willing to forego its privileges, there will not be wanting desperate men to make fresh attempts every moment to curtail them.”

“ Be not troubled on that account ; my crown doth not stand in so great a danger from the integrity of an honest man. Would to God that Don Pedro had no more perils to grapple with than this ! And now, sirs, let us depart ; and again I command you to observe well my injunctions.”

In the mean time the cries of the impatient public had greatly increased ; a vast multitude thronged every avenue leading to the mansion of the *Asistente*, and the anxiously expected moment at length arrived. Several officers of justice issued from the palace, and began to open a passage amongst the crowd. Presently two men came out, bearing on their shoulders a figure resembling life, which they placed upon a horse. A murmur of surprise ran through the multitude, when they perceived that the figure was an exact likeness of the King. Not only the image, but the costume in which it was attired, bore the most faithful resemblance to the person of Don Pedro. No sooner was this effigy secured in a manner that it might not fall from the horse, than the *Veintiquatros* issued from the mansion, followed by the *Asistente*, all appareled in their robes of office, and attended with the pomp and circumstance indicative of their authority.

The figure of Don Pedro was pinioned like a condemned criminal, and attended by an executioner, who carried an axe, while the roll of muffled drums, and other lugubrious sounds, served as an accompaniment to this singular procession. Thus, with a solemn and slow pace, the *Asistente*, followed by a vast multitude, reached the fatal spot, from which the stains of blood had not yet been removed. Upon his arrival, Juan Pasqual ordered the effigy of Don Pedro to be placed in the very scene of that King's violent deed, and near which a block was now perceived. This being done, and every one having taken his place, nothing was wanting to complete the extraordinary spectacle but the presence of the culprit King, who shortly made his appearance. His arrival produced a powerful sensation in the crowd; and suddenly their busy murmur was hushed into a profound silence, and they appeared as if in expectation of some catastrophe. But the *Asistente*, unawed either by the sight of the King, attended by his valiant knights, or by the ominous terrors of the public, preserved the utmost composure of deportment.

"Behold me present!" said the King. "Now, most worthy *Asistente*, what wouldst thou with Don Pedro? What may be the purport of this strange summons?"

"You are summoned to hear the sentence merited by your offence pronounced, and carried into execution."

A hollow murmur of horror spread through the throng: Padilla, with officious zeal, rode up near to the spot where the *Asistente* stood, and in an insolent tone said—

“Forbear, rash man! Forbear!”

“Soldiers!” cried Juan Pasqual, without evincing the least emotion, “take this turbulent cavalier away.”

“If they dare make such an attempt,” exclaimed Padilla, laying hold of his weapon, “they shall repent for their temerity!”

“Sir Castilian,” cried Don Pedro, sternly, “retire from that place, and utter no menaces against a man who fears not even those of the King of Castile.”

This forbearing disposition of Don Pedro augmented the amazement of the assemblage, and induced every one to witness, in respectful order, the progress of the strange affair. The *Asistente* then, in a firm and clear voice, said—

“Don Pedro of Castile, by your own confession, you stand convicted of a homicide perpetrated on the person of the guard of the night, Antonio Mendez, when he was discharging his duty. This act renders you worthy of death——”

A confused murmur interrupted the *Asistente*.

“Silence, churls!” fiercely cried the King; “let the magistrate proceed.”

“In due punishment of your guilt,” continued Juan Pasqual, in the same unaltered tone, “I pass

the sentence of death upon you : the sentence I shall execute to the greatest extent of my power ; therefore, as I cannot have control over your person, the decree of justice shall take effect on yonder effigy, bearing your resemblance, and attired in the apparel which has been your own. Thus I testify my horror of thy deed, and thus also I fulfil, as far as in my authority rests, those duties which my station entails upon me. Let the witnessing of this ceremony be in part an atonement for your offence, and let it produce on your mind a salutary effect.—Now, guards, do as ye are instructed.”

Hereupon the figure was taken down from the horse, and its head being laid on the block, it was severed from the body by the executioner, who afterwards held the trophy to the public view. So daring an act occasioned the deepest excitement. No one could conceive how the violent temper of the King could brook the proceedings of the *Asistente* ; but the astonishment of all was greatly increased by what followed.

“ Now let that head,” said Juan Pasqual, “ be niched on the corner of this street for a whole month, in commemoration of the King’s offence.”

Don Pedro then advanced towards the *Asistente*, and with a sedate tone of voice addressed him to the following effect :—

“ Most honourable *Asistente* of Seville, I congratulate myself for having committed the distri-

bution of justice to such efficient hands ; this act renders thee more worthy than ever of my trust, and of the respect of the public. Thou art confirmed in the dignity which thou holdest with so much honour. I acknowledge the justice of thy sentence ; and henceforth let a bust of my head, made in stone, be placed here, not for a month, but for as long as it endures : that effigy shall record to posterity the event which marks this day."

This confirmation and honourable testimony to the virtue of the *Asistente* was received by the assembled crowd with unmingled approbation—with shouts of applause that were unfortunately but seldom wont to accompany the proceedings of Don Pedro. The King liberally rewarded the old woman for the fearless avowal she had made against him, and the street in which the transaction took place was called from that moment *Calle del Candilejo*, or the Street of the Old Lamp, in commemoration of that which had enabled the female to discover the offender. This street still exists in Seville, bearing the same name ; it is narrow and winding, and, niched in a corner, is clearly to be seen, though much defaced by time, a stone bust, which tradition asserts to be the very effigy of Don Pedro, placed there by his express command.

The authenticity of the fact is not disputed, and it is sanctioned by the authority of the historian Zurita, in his annals of the city of Seville.

The Master of Santiago.

“ A que violentos excésos
Una passion irritada
Lleva, si no es atajada
Con razon en sus progrésos !”

LOPE DE VEGA.

“ What dreadful havoc in the human breast
The passions make, when unconfined !”

YOUNG.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE MASTER OF SANTIAGO.

The Master of Santiago.

“OH, France ! oh, my country ! sad were the day and hour when I left thy smiling plains to be welcomed Queen of Castile—a heavy burden upon my heart portended evil. To the joyous greetings of my friends and relatives I answered only with tears ; for they, alas ! came unbidden, even as they have ever done since the moment that I was wedded to the cruel Spaniard. Oh ! Pedro, what is my crime to merit this rigorous treatment ? A queen only in name, I am a slave—a wretched slave in reality.

“ The crown they put upon my head
Was a crown of blood and sighs ;
God grant me soon another crown
More precious in the skies ! ”

This mournful complaint was uttered by the unfortunate Blanche of Bourbon, who, shortly after her marriage with Don Pedro, the cruel King and unjust husband, had been separated from his side, and kept in a state of honorary confinement. So fully was the mind of Don Pedro engrossed with the charms of his beloved Maria Padilla, so given

up to the enjoyments of his disastrous amours, that the French Princess, remarkable alike for the beauty of her person and the accomplishments of her mind, was treated with the most unmerited neglect, and suffered to pine away in solitude, whilst her rival shone in the court and received all the honours due to the Queen of Castile. The very name of Blanche was hateful to the King; and the plots which were hourly framed under pretence of defending her, tended only to inflame still more the hostile feelings of her husband.

The unfortunate Queen, as was her melancholy usage, was giving way to her sorrows and indulging in painful recollection of past happiness, when the door of her apartment gently opened, and a gallant cavalier stood before her. She started in surprise and alarm; but her emotion was greatly increased when she recognised in her suitor Don Fadrique, the Master of Santiago, Don Pedro's natural brother.

"Don Fadrique," said the Queen, "what imprudence is this? I have already commanded you not to expose your life and my honour to such perils. Alas! you know well that the King, though he cannot feel the tender emotions of love towards Blanche, can yet harbour the feelings of jealousy. Begone, Don Fadrique!"

Her agitation increased every moment. The Master of Santiago strove in vain to assuage it by his encouraging expressions.

“No, my Queen,” he said, with respectful tenderness, “the danger which you apprehend is not so imminent. Nay, that danger will soon cease; and, with the help of God, the Queen of Castile shall be put into the full enjoyment of her rights.”

“Oh! do not mock me with words of hope — delusive hope, that only augments the misery of my condition by repeated disappointment. The attempts which the nobles of the land are making in my behalf will only end in their ruin and in that of the unfortunate whose cause they espouse.”

“Dispel, Princess, such gloomy thoughts!” answered Don Fadrique with animation; “God favours the exertions of the righteous. My gallant brother, Trastamara, has been most cordially received by the King of Aragon, who, in horror and detestation of Pedro’s cruelties, will lend his support to our undertaking.”

“Peace, peace, Sir Castilian!” interposed Blanche, nobly; “utter no more those fearful words; it is treason — dark treason that thou dost not scruple to unfold to the Queen, and that treason is levelled against the rights of her King and husband.”

“Rights, lady!” exclaimed Fadrique warmly; “is it one of the rights of a king and a husband to break through the holy bond that he has sworn to respect? — To ill-treat a princess of a glorious house — to confine her to painful seclusion, whilst he, shamelessly and openly, lies in the embraces of an ambitious paramour? Is it a right attached to

the dignity of a crown to crush the people with an iron tramp, to give free vent to inordinate cruelty ; and, for the lightest pretence, lavishly shed the noblest blood in the land? Such rights the free and powerful lords of Castile will never admit. Heaven forbid they should so disgracefully forget the independent spirit of their ancestors ! The throne of this realm is not the seat from which a monarch is to issue his capricious and sanguinary decrees ; but to extend a protecting hand to the subject. Our cause is, therefore, most sacred ; and, far from wearing the aspect of revolt, bears the stamp of patriotism. We are, besides, encouraged and protected by the great John of Bourbon, who cannot tamely behold the indignities to which you are subjected. My good brother, Trastamara, is in negotiation with the renowned knight, Sir Bertrand Du Guesclin, and every thing promises the most favourable results to our enterprize. Far, therefore, from desponding, cheer your drooping spirits, my injured Queen, for many brave knights are resolved to shed their best blood in your defence ; and of these knights, the Master of Santiago justly claims a preeminence in zeal and devotion to your interest, and will gladly forfeit his life in their support."

The warmth, tone, and manner exhibited by Don Fadrique, and the tender yet respectful looks with which he accompanied his words, greatly increased the agitation of Blanche. Alas ! she but

too well knew the feelings that swayed the heart of the noble Castilian. She knew that he nourished a hopeless passion, which, though he would never dare to unfold to its object, yet prompted him to promote her interest with the warmest zeal and activity. The Queen was deeply distressed at the sentiments with which she had inspired the heart of Don Fadrique, and her anxiety was augmented by the conviction that she was not totally indifferent to his merits. Often had the recollection of the gallant cavalier disturbed the sad monotony of her gloomy reflections; often had his image smiled on her in the fair but fallacious creation of dreams. She used her strenuous efforts to discard these images from her imagination, but in vain; for they maintained a stubborn possession, and often whispered to her heart how far happier her lot would have been, if, instead of becoming the Queen of Castile, fate had decreed that she should have been the wife of the Master of Santiago.

With this conviction dwelling on her mind, it is not surprising that Blanche should feel emotion and alarm at the visits of Don Fadrique, or that she should have been anxious to avoid them. She had already expressed such a desire; but the Castilian always found a pretext to elude complying with it. This imprudent zeal, and the fatal influence of love, had led him to commit several acts, which, according to the suspicious and vindictive

temper of Don Pedro, could not but produce, if once known, the most disastrous consequences. Of this the Queen was fully aware ; and it was an additional motive, if indeed there needed another, to protest against any further intercourse with Don Fadrique.

“ Alas ! deluded Cavalier,” she said mournfully, “ thou art not aware of the precipice to which thou art conducting me and thyself ! How thou canst find access to this castle, I cannot surmise ; but yet I apprehend that the King is duly informed of these frequent visits, and they must necessarily excite his suspicions.”

“ Fear not, sweet Queen,” said the Master ; “ the warder of this castle is devoted to my interest, and deeply mourns for the miseries you suffer. Yes, Hinestrosa is an honourable Castilian, and above being a base betrayer.”

“ Yet,” said the Queen despondingly, “ he belongs to the Hinestrosa family—a family much favoured by the King, and, on that account, greatly attached to his person. But even supposing that your visits here should be attended with perfect safety, I cannot—must not consent to receive you any more. My character as a queen and wife—my situation as a prisoner—renders my compliance, in this respect, an act of wilful guilt. Don Fadrique, this is the last time you must see me, unless, indeed, accompanied by the King, or by his own commands.”

“ I will obey,” answered Don Fadrique moodily ;

“ I will not return again until I can do it at the head of a victorious party, and, snatching the Queen of Castile from the unmerited obscurity in which she lingers, remove her to that court which she was born to grace and honour.”

“ Forbear, Sir Master,” cried Blanche ; “ let not any mistaken zeal for me make thee forget thy duties to the King. Cruel and unjust as he is to me, I cannot cease to recollect the obligations that bind me to him ; and, so help me God ! I will be strictly faithful to them. Tell the noble Trastamara, therefore, and the rest of the leaguered nobles, that at the same time that I feel deep gratitude for their generous intentions, I must reprobate any unlawful measures resorted to in order to assert my rights. Strive to persuade the King—break the fatal bonds that enslave his soul to the imperious Maria ; but attempt nought in violence and unruly rebellion to his authority.”

The Master of Santiago bent a melancholy gaze upon the Queen. He was struck with admiration at the generous disposition and the stern adherence to duty of the noble victim ; but this circumstance only tended to inflame the more his hatred against her oppressor, and strengthen his anxious wishes to see her righted. With this firm resolution, which, not to distress the Queen, he confined to his own bosom, he took a respectful farewell, and left the castle.

Don Fadrique was one of the most accomplished

cavaliers of Castile. His bravery, noble character, generosity, and gallant bearing had endeared him to his brother knights, and made him justly celebrated in Spain. Indeed Don Pedro, who was a great admirer of knightly prowess, had often applauded the strength and skill of the Master in the tournament, no less than his courage in the field of battle. Of all his natural brothers, Don Fadrique was the one whom he loved the most, or rather hated the least. He had lived with him until late, if not in habits of cordial friendship and brotherly affection, with enough of regard and consideration to make their intimacy not only endurable, but even agreeable. The King had distinguished Don Fadrique on several occasions, and when his marriage with Blanche of Bourbon was negotiated and concluded, he selected him from amongst his courtiers to be at the head of the embassy which he sent to Valladolid to welcome the Queen into Spain.

It was then that the Master of Santiago saw Blanche for the first time ; and it was then also that he was fatally inspired with a violent passion for her—a passion the most distressing, as he was bound to consider its indulgence as the most flagrant dereliction of all duty. He inwardly cursed the hour in which his brother had selected him for the honour of receiving the Queen. That Queen he was compelled to respect as the betrothed of his brother and his King ; and the intimate friendship into which he was led with Blanche by virtue of his station, contributed to increase the difficul-

ties of his situation, and to heighten his sorrow and disappointment.

These feelings were converted into others of a more fearful tendency when he afterwards perceived the unworthy treatment which the lovely French Princess experienced from Don Pedro. The coldness which characterized the first interviews were of an ominous nature, yet no one suspected what was to be the sequel. The indifference of the King was soon changed into bitter aversion, and his neglectful treatment into real persecution. Meantime Maria Padilla ruled his heart with an absolute sway. She was in reality the Queen of Castile, whilst her unfortunate rival wore a mock title, which served as an addition to her wrongs and humiliation.

This circumstance was gradually seized upon by some of the nobles, who, being ripe for revolt, only waited for a pretext to justify their undertaking. The cruelties of the King added to the ambition of Trastamara; and the factious spirit prevalent amongst the grandees had produced fatal commotions in the kingdom, which were now ready to burst forth in a civil war. No one felt the indignities suffered by the Queen more poignantly than Don Fadrique; and no one, therefore, entered into the league with more zeal, or with less regard to personal interest. Whilst all his brother nobles had prudently infused some share of private interest into their patriotic resolutions, the Master of Santiago was solely alive to the wrongs of his country

and the Queen. His hatred for the King was therefore founded on just and honourable motives ; and this persuasion made him also one of the most active of the conspirators, and the one whom his brother Trastamara, the acknowledged leader of the plot, always honoured with the most implicit trust. Hence that clandestine correspondence which in the sequel proved so fatal to the Master.

The active spirit and daring courage—the noble disinterestedness and indefatigable perseverance which had always been the distinctive features of Don Fadrique's character, and by which he had rendered so much service to the King, were now turned with equal warmth against the cruel sovereign. The confederacy of the grandees was very powerful: Trastamara, Don Fadrique, the Infants of Aragon, La Cerda, Albuquerque, and other influential names, gave their strength to the league ; and they were on the point of seizing the Queen, when Pedro, duly apprized of their intention, had her removed from Anevalo to the Alcazar of Toledo. He himself, with a large force, appeared at Toro with such astonishing rapidity, that the measures of the nobles were at that time totally disconcerted, and most of them obliged to fly. The King, however, in consideration of the services which his brother Don Fadrique had rendered him before, freely pardoned him this act of rebellion ; but he was induced ever after to look on the Master with distrust.

The failure of this first attempt, instead of damping the spirits of the conspirators, produced no other effect than that of confirming them in their resolutions. Their hatred for the Padillas, who by means of their kindred with the King's mistress had grown so powerful and arrogant as to excite their jealousy, was now greatly heightened. New schemes were therefore devised, and new plans formed, to insure the success of a second attempt. Such was the posture of affairs when the Master of Santiago visited the Queen at the Alcazar of Toledo.

But that confiding cavalier was greatly abused when he believed that he could rely on the faith of Hinestrosa. That treacherous man was actually pursuing a system of the deepest duplicity. With the false smooth tongue that lulled the suspicions of Don Fadrique, he was busily engaged in awakening all the stormy passions of the King, to whom he had sent a faithful report of the conduct of the Master ; his visits to the Queen were minutely described and insidiously commented on ; for by this apparent zeal for Don Pedro's interest, the sordid Hinestrosa hoped to conciliate his good graces and obtain the preferment to which he aspired. He had received encouragement from the King to proceed in his treacherous behaviour, only taking care to send faithful intelligence ; and, should things grow to a desperate extremity, he was ordered to bind the Queen and send her to Seville under a strong escort.

Meantime the King was meditating the direst plans of revenge. His ardent soul boiled in the wildest ebullition of wrath. He saw himself surrounded on every side with plotters and conspirators ; the blood which he had already spilt in profusion, seemed only to have increased his thirst for more. If Blanche had before been indifferent to him, she now became an object of unbounded hate. This dark sentiment Doña Maria Padilla took subtle pains to nourish in the King's breast, instead of attempting to extinguish it. That beautiful but dangerous woman, though far from being the basilisk, the fury, which some writers have been pleased to depict her, possessed those violent passions which rendered her influence of the worst consequence with a man of such a temper as Don Pedro. She loved him besides with the sincerest attachment, and felt all the jealousy natural to a woman who knew the doubtful nature of her situation, and who was fully sensible of the precarious tenure by which she held her dominion.

Blanche of Bourbon lived, and was the acknowledged Queen of Castile ; and though she found a great security for the continuance of her power in the King's aversion for her unfortunate rival, yet policy counselled her to keep awake rather than soften that feeling, as well as to arouse the vindictive spirit of Don Pedro against those who had daringly declared themselves the champions of the French Princess.

To these natural feelings of an impassioned and proud woman, were added other considerations, of a tendency equally fatal, though not so absorbing at the first examination. The relatives of the beautiful Maria were devoured by an inordinate ambition: their thirst for honours and power seemed only to increase in proportion as it was indulged. They knew the ascendancy which they had over the mind of the King, as long as their kinswoman held him under her magic influence, and they were resolved abundantly to avail themselves of so favourable a juncture for promoting their fortunes. In these ambitious schemes no one was more daring and insatiate than Don Padilla, the brother of Maria. It was he who filled the susceptible bosom of his sister with the most pernicious counsels. It was he who insidiously excited the jealousies of love, or awoke the wild visions of power, as it best suited his designs. Being a man of no ordinary talents, and having acquired a great control over the mind of Maria by means of those abilities, and the strong affection she bore him, he was at length emboldened to consider his sister as a most efficient agent to advance his views; and this task, indeed, she performed with such success as to alarm the fears and arouse the indignation of the Castilian nobles.

But neither the favours already wrested from the King, nor the storm which was preparing, could satisfy the avidity or check the boldness of

Padilla. He had long looked with a longing eye on the dignity of the Mastership of Santiago; that honourable distinction was the constant theme of his fondest dreams: yet, the greatest obstacles were to be vanquished before he could obtain the summit of his desires. The present Master of the order was sincerely esteemed and respected by the Castilians: to deprive him of his post, without a just pretence, would be an act of folly, of madness, that would be deeply resented, and perchance severely visited, upon the successor. And yet, to wait patiently until Don Fadrique, a young cavalier of eight-and-twenty, died, presented a very discouraging prospect, and offered one of those desperate chances to which presumptive heirs are peculiarly adverse. This was therefore a perplexing dilemma: yet there was some glimmer of hope to guide the speculations of Padilla; and this arose from the persuasion that the death which, by a natural process, would be a protracted time in taking place, might be considerably quickened by violent means.

Unhappily the ardent Don Fadrique was himself conspiring to favour the views of the ambitious pretender; and whilst he was confidently toiling to forward the cause of the Queen, and assert the liberty of Castile, he knew not that the King was acquainted with all his proceedings, and that he had two powerful enemies continually fanning the destructive fire which those proceedings had kindled in Don Pedro's breast. The Master had

quitted the presence of Blanche more than ever captivated by her beauty and soft resignation, and more than ever devoted to her interest ; which he resolved to promote at the expense of his own happiness and life. As he descended the stairs of the Alcazar, he was met by the perfidious Hinestrosa, who, in his usual soft manner, addressed a few friendly words to the cavalier, and, the very next moment, was employed in penning an exaggerated account of his conduct.

In a mood of gloomy thought, which fearfully agitated his dark mind, the King of Castile was pacing one of the large saloons of the Alcazar of Seville. The bitter smile of his proud lip, the piercing fire of his expressive eyes, the irregularity of his step, and the fitful halts which he made ever and anon, gave ominous indications that his breast was labouring with one of those terrific volcanoes, the explosions of which were wont to be so disastrous to the Castilians. A theme of more than usual importance seemed to engross his mind, and he remained for some time plunged in this darksome reverie, for in such awful moments no one was hardy enough to break in upon his privacy. Don Pedro, however, fancied he heard a gentle step, and, with a gathering frown, turned to learn who could be the rash intruder, when, suddenly, the fearful expression of his features relaxed, and the softest smile usurped the place of the frown.

The beautiful, the fondly beloved Maria stood

before him ! If any thing could render the passion of the King for this celebrated woman excusable, it was her extraordinary beauty, and the still more extraordinary accomplishments of her mind. Few women could compete with her in the first—none, certainly, in the second. She was fair, and yet her eyes were of a beaming black ; she was large, and yet all her limbs were of the most perfect symmetry. She seemed, indeed, to unite in her person those opposite charms which are seldom found in one woman, however beautiful. To this she added a voice of angelic sweetness, and a bewitching smile that ill betokened the pride of her soul—the daring resolution of her heart. Her hand was so soft, fair, and perfect, that the King often swore by it ; and the hand of Maria passed into a sort of proverb with the people when they wished to express some object of singular beauty.

But it was more by the powers of her mind than the charms of her person, that this gifted woman governed the King. There was something so persuasive in her eloquence—she was so complete an adept in the art of addressing the passions, prejudices, and foibles of human nature, that the King, notwithstanding his stubborn temper, was sure to yield to the expostulations of his mistress. Her mind had been studiously cultivated, and she possessed a store of knowledge, to which none of her sex, and few of the stronger, could pretend, at that period. To this she added strong passions,

and a resolution of purpose that seemed incompatible with her sex, and the feminine softness of her look. Her heart was by no means cruel, though she was, unfortunately, very often the cause of some of the crimes of Don Pedro. The many acts of benevolence and kindness for which she was noted, and the laudable use which she made of the wealth she obtained, either by distributing it in charitable purposes, or devoting it to some object of public good or embellishment, all tended to confirm an opinion that, had fate not placed her in the difficult situation she occupied, or had that situation been unencumbered with a rival Queen, the name of Maria Padilla, instead of exciting the indignation of posterity, would have moved its esteem and admiration.

Maria approached the King with her accustomed placidity of look and sweetness of tone. The frown which blackened Pedro's brow vanished, and he gazed with doating fondness on that being, on whom it would seem that his whole share of humanity was bestowed.

"My Liege, what new sorrow disturbs your peace? Have those traitorous subjects again rendered themselves liable to your displeasure?"

"Alas! my love, it would appear that the whole of Castile is made up of a mass of hatred and revolt; and that in so vast a field of sorrow there is but one peaceful spot on which I can tranquilly recline."

As he uttered these words, he caressingly took the beauteous hand of his mistress, and having kissed it, pressed it softly to his heart.

“ Yes, Maria,” he continued after a pause, “ my rebellious nobles carry on their vile machinations with more effrontery than ever. The bastard, the odious, incorrigible bastard, is now at the court of the false King of Aragon, plotting how to deprive me of my crown; and the Master of Santiago, whose life I spared, partly at thy prayer, when I surprised him at Toro, is now more indefatigable than ever in seconding the schemes of his brother. I have just received despatches from Hinestrosa, who informs me that this restless Don Fadrique is more assiduous than ever in his visits to the Queen.”

“ To the Queen!” echoed Maria, in a tone of displeased surprise.

“ To Blanche of Bourbon, I mean, love,” answered the King, submissively endeavouring to efface the disagreeable impression which that title had made on his beloved mistress.

“ And can you be amazed at that,” said Maria, conciliated, “ when you know the ardent love which the Master feels for the captive French Princess? That love, encouraged as it is no doubt by Blanche, will precipitate Don Fadrique into the blackest crimes against his lawful king and relative.”

She cautiously watched what effect these insidi-

ous words would produce, and, as she had fondly anticipated, the displeasure of Don Pedro was strongly, darkly exhibited in his agitated features.

“Thou speakest well, love,” he muttered with a bitter scowl; “that rebellious dog will attempt all to please the accursed French woman.”

“Surely Don Pedro is not jealous of the Master?” observed Maria.

“Jealous! Heaven forefend! Wherefore should I feel jealous, where there is no love? No, no, my sweet Maria, thou art but too intimately convinced that thou art the sole, the entire, the absolute ruler of my heart: that iron heart, proud and haughty, and rebellious to all control, sweetly and readily acknowledges thy empire. No, I am not jealous of the Master; but yet, the dignity of my crown, as well as its safety, requires ——”

“That he should be punished, and checked in his progress,” interrupted Maria, hastily. “It is most just, and I should be the first to advise such a course.”

“Yes,” muttered the King, aroused to anger, “the false Master of Santiago shall bitterly rue his gallantry and love. This very moment I shall issue an order for his private arrest.”

“Hold, my Lord,” said his mistress, interposing; “that would be too precipitate. No open act of revolt—nay, nothing but conjectures, have yet come to light concerning Don Fadrique. His sudden arrest would only tend to heighten the tumultuous

spirit of the conspirators, but not to correct the Master."

"Heaven save the mark!" quoth the King in bitterness, "I shall hit upon a most beseeeming correction, I trow; for when nothing else will calm the fire of Fadrique's head, its separation from the rest of the body cannot fail to extinguish it."

"Oh! my own Pedro," said Maria, soothingly, "discard such horrid thoughts from thy mind. The blood which you have shed is already too plentiful—it makes me shudder."

"Alas! Maria," resumed the King, "is it not just that the traitor's blood should be spilt, before he sheds my own?"

"No, no, my honoured King, my best and dearest friend; such an atrocious deed cannot be contemplated by you—it must *not* be, Don Pedro; if thou really cherish the image of Maria Padilla, and prize her love, the remotest idea of such an act must be dismissed with horror from your heart."

"And you counsel me to let rebellious dogs plot against my crown and life; and I, knowing their foul machinations, am to stand quiet, looking on like a deluded sot! a dotard! to be the very butt, the point of derision! No, Maria, you cannot wish so spiritless, so dastardly a conduct in Don Pedro of Castile."

"Heaven forefend I should!" answered the lady; "but, without resorting to such fearful ex-

pedients, there is a way of punishing Don Fadrique, that will gall his pride, and will not appear unjust to the eyes of the people."

"Name it, my love; it shall be immediately adopted."

"It is but meet and prudent," resumed she with sagacity, "that all factious spirits—nay, all influential men, strongly suspected of carrying on secret machinations against the King, should be removed from places of trust, which in their hands might be made use of against the very sovereign who bestowed those favours. Let, therefore, Don Fadrique be immediately deprived of the Mastership of Santiago; and let that distinction be conferred on a person who, instead of using it as a weapon of offence against the bountiful giver, will convert it into the means of promoting his sacred cause."

"By Heaven, Maria, thou speakest in great prudence," said the King. "Don Fadrique shall be deposed from his rank without loss of time, and his place shall be filled by the man of thy choice; for who, alas! is more interested than thou art in my good and preservation? The new Master, if selected by thee, will be an adherent in whom I may confide. Name the man, Maria."

"My honoured Liege," answered she with sweetness, "that there is no being on the earth who is more devoted to the King than Maria Padilla, I take pride to believe; nor will I by false delicacy

and ill-timed scruples be deterred from naming the man whom I consider most fit to obtain the Mastership, however interested I may appear in that choice. The person to fill that station with safety to Don Pedro, must be one who bears a strong affection to Maria—and you know, my generous friend, that such men are not numerous in Castile. Yet if any one is interested in the conservation of Don Pedro's crown, connected as the fortunes of Maria Padilla are with it, it is surely my own brother, of whose devotion to your cause you have also many and incontestable proofs."

She delivered these words without hesitation; nor did Don Pedro imagine that they were not inspired by the sincerest regard for his interest. He accordingly replied with equal readiness—

"Well, my sweet Maria, thy brother shall be Grand Master of the order of Santiago; my royal promise is passed; bid him come immediately to swear fealty on the announcement of this boon. I trust that he will ever prove the devoted servant he has been to this day, and that his new dignity will only stimulate him to merit fresh honours from Don Pedro. The decree of deposition against Don Fadrique shall be issued immediately; and now farewell, my own Maria! I must see what new treason has been lately discovered—farewell!"

Don Padilla was not slow in appearing at the Alcazar to be invested with his new dignity. His most ardent wishes were now fulfilled, and he felt

a pleasure proportionate to the greatness of the honour conferred: he was warm in his professions of devotion and fidelity to the King, and appeared to be inflamed with so great a zeal for the cause of Don Pedro, that the latter, despite of the sad lessons of experience, and his own distrustful disposition, readily believed the sincerity of Padilla.

The new Master of Santiago entered upon his functions with unusual spirit and alacrity. His sister augured most favourably, and the King was pleased. But what were the feelings of Don Fadrique on receiving the first news of his deposition! For some time he could scarcely give credence to such an event, till he reflected on the ascendancy which the Padillas had usurped over the King; and the idea of which filled him with indescribable fury and resentment. He made a thousand plans of revenge, but was detained from want of power to execute them: the moment to break into open revolt was not yet arrived, and he dare not make any rash attempt on account of his own private concerns which might compromise the success of the meditated enterprise.

If there was any thing which could add to the chagrin and indignation produced by his deposition, it was the idea that Padilla was his successor; who, with all his family, were the first vowed to destruction, as the immediate causes of the evils that preyed upon the land. This new affront powerfully augmented the resentment and hatred

of Don Fadrique, and he ardently thirsted for the moment in which he could wreak an ample vengeance on the obnoxious and intriguing individual. To him alone he ascribed the present event ; for though he was instructed that his deposition was in consequence of offences which the King cared not to divulge, Don Fadrique, perfectly secure in the fidelity and honour of Hinestrosa, could not imagine that Don Pedro was acquainted with his frequent visits to Blanche. Thus he felt strongly convinced that the whole transaction was the result of Padilla's ambition and manœuvres.

Acting upon this idea, and with the headlong impetuosity that was natural to him, Don Fadrique quickly mounted his horse, and hastened to Seville, with the view of presenting himself before the King. The thoughts that occupied his mind were so jarring and confused, that when he put his foot in the stirrup, he could not himself well say what would be the line of conduct most proper to pursue when once arrived at Seville. He only listened to the powerful impulse of the moment to confront his enemies ; for as such he considered both Don Pedro and Padilla. Indeed, so blinded was the unfortunate Don Fadrique by his passion, that not a passing thought of the dangers to which he exposed himself by his imprudent conduct ever came across his excited mind. He did not reflect that he was rushing headlong to provoke the power of two fearful enemies. Neither the vindictive and

violent temper of the King, nor the equally fatal policy of Padilla, could cool the passion that stormed within his breast ; and he therefore left Toledo without taking any of those necessary precautions, which common prudence would have counselled when embarking upon an expedition so full of peril as the present.

Meantime the King had received another proof of the machinations of Don Fadrique. A private letter which had been despatched to Trastamara, transmitting a faithful account of the state and progress of the conspiracy, had fallen into the power of Don Pedro. This letter was in the handwriting of the late Master of Santiago, who most openly avouched himself to be indefatigable in his exertions. He related his visits to the Queen—that she was grateful for the interest they took in her fate ; but that she deprecated any violent measures ; and then subjoined a list of such names as had been lately added to the league.

The rage of the King upon the perusal of this fatal document was ungovernable — terrific. He stamped like a madman, foamed at the mouth, and uttered a thousand hurried imprecations. The soothing power of Maria was now more necessary than ever ; but even the magic influence of that beauteous and privileged woman could not for a long time succeed in assuaging the stormy passions of the King. He made a dark vow of revenge. He swore that all his bastard brothers, and their

accomplices, should be subjected to the most excruciating tortures, and then put to an ignominious death like the vilest felons. Nay, he threatened ruin and desolation to all Castile, and called on the lightning of heaven to descend and consume the rank harvest of treason that so plentifully grew in his turbulent dominions.

Maria, though accustomed to the angry passion of Don Pedro, had never yet witnessed one so violent, so absorbing, one that menaced such fearful consequences; she therefore felt alarmed, and used all the fascinating powers of her mind and beauty to soothe the exasperated sovereign.

“Maria,” he cried with a voice of mixed bitterness and regret, “behold the fruits of my ill-advised leniency to the traitors. Look—read the black, poisonous scroll, and tremble at the dangers that surround thy King and lover,—and that because he followed too implicitly the dictates of thy mistaken compassion. But I shall for the future be my own counsellor and agent; I will not trust my safety in the keeping of any one’s affection — a sensitive ——”

“Nay, Don Pedro, this is ungrateful,” answered Maria with sorrow and reproach; “I do not deserve this from you; Heaven is my witness that I have always advised you for the best.—Alas! had you followed the impulse of your own violent disposition, ere this you would have fallen a victim to its consequences. The minds of the Castilians

are already too deeply exasperated; conciliatory measures will be, in the present state of Castile, far more advisable than violent extremes."

By these and the like remonstrances, Maria again endeavoured to calm the agitation of the King. She, however, succeeded but partially, and her vanity was sorely hurt: that day Don Pedro was in a mood of bitter anger, and it was not till after some time that he appeared completely soothed. Fate was on the alert, and when the mind of the King, by the unremitting exertions of his mistress, had at length been persuaded to avoid violent means, the darkest sentiments of choler and revenge were again awakened by the sudden arrival of Don Fadrique at Seville.

That ill-starred young cavalier, little aware of the stormy agitation that had lately possessed the infuriated King, was now directing his steps towards the Alcazar. The sense of wrong so bitterly galled his ardent soul, and the hatred to the Padillas was so overpowering, that his appearance at the royal palace indicated the arrival of a frenzied madman, rather than of a rational cavalier. Fearlessly he sought the presence of Don Pedro, who was pacing a spacious saloon totally unaccompanied; and though he seemed calm and composed, his countenance still afforded proof that the storm of his heart was not completely subdued. The sudden arrival of Don Fadrique filled him with surprise. He gazed intently on him, as if unde-

cided in what terms to address him. But the Castilian, on his side, did not allow him much time for speculation. With a boldness of tone and demeanour, that at first bereaved the King of utterance, he exclaimed —

“ Behold me, cruel Pedro !—Behold one of the many victims of thy tyranny and injustice !”

“ Don Fadrique,” said the King with sternness, after a pause, “ what brings thee hither ? Has any new treason brought thee to Seville ?”

“ No, false King,” answered Don Fadrique, bitterly, “ my wrongs, my towering wrongs, oblige me to come before thee, not to expect redress, for that, alas ! I know is superfluous, but to testify all the horror and indignation that thy conduct deserves.”

“ Ah, traitor !” cried the King, whose choler was rising by degrees, “ ill hast thou chosen thy time to come and beard thy injured King ; and I marvel that a rancorous, a pertinacious rebel like Don Fadrique dares to venture within the precincts of the Alcazar.”

“ Have I not been foully wronged ?—answer me, ruthless King — have I not been deprived of my rights ?”

“ Rights !” re-echoed the King sarcastically, “ I know of no other rights that thou possessest, but those of plotting with impunity against thy liege Lord.”

“ And ought you not to expect every evil from the disaffected of the land ?”

“ I expect all from traitors,” cried Don Pedro ; “ but, by Heaven, these things shall not be ! And now, Don Fadrique, relieve our sight of thy odious presence, or thou mayest rue this fatal hour.”

“ I fear nought,” answered the knight, dauntlessly ; “ I have been deprived of the Mastership of Santiago, and I will not tamely submit to the affront, but loudly proclaim the injustice to the world.”

“ Begone, traitor !” fiercely cried the King : “ how darest thou come to menace thy injured Sovereign ; when, should he even decree thy death, it would scarcely be sufficient punishment for all thy guilt ! Dost thou not daily, hourly labour with alacrity in forwarding the work of rebellion ?”

“ Who accuses me ?”

“ I have many—many incontestable proofs.”

“ Who accuses me ?” cried Don Fadrique more passionately.

“ Poor deluded wittol,” resumed the King, smiling bitterly, “ all thy proceedings are known to me.”

“ What proceedings, Sir King ? — what proceedings ?”

“ Base traitor, look here—look here, and let thy arrogance be levelled with the ground — let thy hopes be crushed, and let a salutary fear occupy thy plotting heart !—Look here, and tremble !”

As he spoke, he suddenly drew forth a letter to Trastamara, which had been intercepted ; and,

putting it close to his brother's eyes, with redoubled agitation continued—

“ Ay, thou — even thou, with thy marvellous effrontery, must feel abashed at this. Just Heavens! is this a dream? Never was such presumption known before in Castile. Traitors and rebels carry on their vile plots with impunity, and then are hardy enough to come to the King they have offended to prefer ridiculous complaints. Sir, you ought to thank your fortune and my humanity, for thy life would scarcely suffice for the retribution thou dost owe thy injured sovereign. But 'tis not enough that a treacherous correspondence is carried on with the ungrateful and restless Trastamara—it is not enough that thou art constantly seducing the already too weak fidelity of my lords and vassals;—No, to these abominable crimes thou needs must add another, so shameless, so deep, that I cannot even give utterance to the accusation.”

“ I marvel at thy delicacy,” said Don Fadrique, sarcastically.

“ I marvel at thy blinded folly,” answered the King in the same bitter strain. “ What! couldst thou suppose that Don Pedro would be long unacquainted with thy base conduct? How many times, most gallant knight,” he then added, with a smile of mockery, “ how many times has thy courtesy and bravery been to console the captive Princess of France?”

“ I have been often,” answered Don Fadrique, proudly ; “ yes, oft to visit the Queen of Castile in her cruel and unjustifiable confinement.”

“ And she has, no doubt, felt only grateful for thy excessive zeal and complaisance ?”

“ She is dreadfully wronged—but shall be redressed and avenged.”

These bold words, and the equally dauntless manner in which they were pronounced, excited the rage of Don Pedro to an ungovernable degree ;—he stamped fiercely, and uttered horrid imprecations ;—the fearful clamour drew the watchful Doña Maria to the spot : her appearance, instead of tending to calm the irritated spirits of the two brothers, served only to add fuel to the fire that burnt in their hearts. Don Fadrique no sooner perceived her, than, utterly regardless of all consequences, he cried out in a frenzied tone—

“ Behold ! here is the accursed cause of all the misery and degradation of Castile—here is the arbiter of Pedro’s will, the dispensator of his cruel bounties. Ay, ’tis to please her that Don Fadrique is no longer Master of Santiago. Her pernicious charms, and still more pernicious influence, have lighted that fearful flame in Castile which will soon spread into an overwhelming conflagration. The maledictions of all the saints fall on her fatal head !”

“ Oh ! Fadrique, cease,” exclaimed Pedro with more rage, “ cease ! utter no injurious word

against *her*. That offence will fill the measure of thy crimes, and——Forbear! provoke not the arm already lifted against thy criminal head.”

“Let that arm, then, fall with all its power,” madly exclaimed Don Fadrique; “it is not the fear of death that will prevent me from speaking the honourable indignation of my soul. Yes, I repeat it, accursed be that vile woman, the main-spring of all the calamities of my country! Accursed be the day in which King Pedro first beheld her disastrous charms! Boldly I will boast of my purpose—the nobles of Castile will no longer brook this oppression. No, no!—by Heaven, such degradation must cease! They cannot, must not, permit a lovely and virtuous Queen to be treated with unmerited scorn and neglect, whilst the nation is governed by the capricious will of a strumpet.”

The fatal crisis was arrived. The King shook with violent wrath—he fixed his flashing eyes on the unfortunate Don Fadrique, and, with a tone of malignant atrocity—

“’Tis done,” he cried, “’tis done—thy fate is sealed. Guards, seize—seize the traitor!—lead him immediately to execution.”

The saloon was soon filled with men-at-arms; amongst them came some *Ballesteros de maza*.* Don Fadrique saw their approach with unappalled sternness.

* A body of personal guards, armed with large clubs.

“ Let the murderous dogs advance,” he said, firmly ; “ they can but take away my life ; this shall soon be amply avenged on thy own head, ruthless King, and on that of thy fatal and ignominious paramour ! The curse of God is on thy head. Not many years shall the earth be polluted with thy burthen. Du Guesclin will crush thy iron dominion ; and in the starry tower thou shalt atone for thy dark crimes.”

“ Avaunt, false prophet !” exclaimed the King ; “ avaunt ! thy threats I fear not, and thy power and the power of all the leagued traitors I despise. *Ballesteros !*” he then added, “ you hear his sedition—you witness his crime : take him hence—lead him to the court-yard, and there despatch the miscreant.”

His orders were speedily obeyed. Don Fadrique, when he perceived the guards advance to seize him, fiercely grasped his weapon, and appeared determined not to be tamely butchered. He laid one of the *Ballesteros* weltering in his blood ; but his companions, enraged at his fate, closed upon the brave cavalier, and soon succeeded in disarming him. They quickly pinioned his arms, and in this manner conducted him to the court-yard of the Alcazar. The King appeared at a casement—

“ There !” he cried, ferociously—“ there let the traitor meet his doom without further ado ; his riotous spirit may be infused into the turbulent

wretches who swarm in Seville. Put him to death there, and let his abhorred head be given to the dogs, and let that venomous tongue that dared insult my Maria be plucked from the roots !”

The savage servants of a cruel master proceeded eagerly to execute his command ; the death of their companion had excited their revenge, and they were well accustomed to the work of death ; for in the disastrous reign of Don Pedro, their sanguinary ministry had been often called into action. They accordingly fell upon the defenceless Don Fadrique, and aiming a well-directed blow at his devoted head with a ponderous club, it was literally smashed ; the blood and brains were scattered on the ground, and the butchers proceeded to sever it, disfigured and almost incognizable as it was, from the trunk. The death of the unfortunate Master of Santiago, though barbarous, was quick : he uttered one cry of agony, a welcome announcement to the ears of his cruel brother, and expired. Don Pedro’s mastiffs were then let loose, and they speedily repaired to the disgusting banquet : their howling soon drew the rabble together, who came flocking into the court, and, awed and amazed with the frightful scene, filled the air with a confused murmur of horror. The body of Don Fadrique was carried away to be interred ; whilst the gory trophy remained in the court-yard, for the dogs to lick, and the collecting crowd to behold.

And ever as the mastiff tore,
His bloody teeth were shown,
With growl and snort he made his sport,
And picked to the bone.

The baying of the beast was loud,
And swiftly on the street
There gather'd round a gaping crowd
To see the mastiff eat.

Then out and spake King Pedro—

“What governance is this?—

The rabble rout, my gate without,
Torment my dogs, I wiss.”

Then out and spake King Pedro's Page—

“It is the Master's head,

The mastiff tears it in his rage,
Therewith they him have fed.”

Then out and spake the ancient nurse,
That nursed the brothers twain—

“On thee, King Pedro, lies the curse,
Thy brother thou hast slain!

“A thousand harlots there may be
Within the realm of Spain;

But where is she, can give to thee
Thy brother back again?”

Came darkness o'er King Pedro's brow,

When thus he heard her say;

He sorely rued th' accursed vow
He had fulfill'd that day.

The horrible doom of the Master of Santiago, soon as the first ebullition of wrath had subsided, filled the King with a degree of awful gloom which none of his cruel deeds had before excited. A

sombre mood settled on his darkened brow for a long time; and the caresses and endearments of Maria, instead of affording relief, only increased his horror by bringing vividly to his imagination the fatal cause of the appalling fratricide.

The fate of Don Fadrique also incensed the minds of the people to the highest degree. So atrocious a murder—a murder not even softened by the apparent show of judicial proceedings, created general horror and disgust. It may reasonably be supposed that it was one of those crying deeds which precipitated the revolt, and, involving Castile in the horrors of civil war, led in the sequel to the downfall of Don Pedro, and to his equally frightful death by the hand of his brother, the Count of Trastamara.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY.

Reigns of Henry the Second, John the First, and Henry the Third, surnamed the Invalid.

A PERIOD OF 37 YEARS.

1369. HENRY of Trastamara, having obtained the crown of Castile by a fratricide, endeavoured to conciliate the affection of the nation ; but the commencement of his reign was not without disturbances. Several competitors laid claims to the crown of Castile and Leon, among which the most conspicuous were Ferdinand of Portugal, as descendant of Sancho the Fourth, and the Duke of Lancaster, in virtue of his marriage with one of the daughters of Don Pedro. Henry, however, had sagacity enough to disperse the storm that was threatening his reign, and obtained at length a firm tenure of the throne. His reign, until his death, was mild and tranquil, and, upon the whole, one of comparative happiness to his subjects.

1379. Henry, who suffered much from the gout, died a victim to it at Burgos : the advice which he gave to John, his son and successor to the crown, was remarkable. He counselled him to take no part in the quarrels of the church ; to be grateful to France, and to all those who had aided him to obtain the throne of Castile, but yet to watch them ; to despise and mistrust those who had remained neuter during the wars, but to place the greatest reliance upon those who had adhered faithfully to Don Pedro.

1380. John and his consort were crowned at Burgos, with great magnificence. Following the advice of his father, he renewed his alliance with France, and aided the king of that

nation in his wars against the English. He was not, however, so prudent with respect to not interfering in the quarrels of the church, for he embraced the side of Pope Clement, for which reason he was excommunicated by his adversary, Pope Urban.

1383. Ferdinand of Portugal having died without sons, various competitors started up for the crown, amongst whom was John, king of Castile, in virtue of his marriage with the Portuguese Infanta, contracted shortly before : he prepared accordingly to invade Portugal, and sent a fleet to blockade Lisbon.

1384. The Portuguese, eager to maintain their independence, had resolved to place John, the Master of Avis, on the throne : they therefore went to meet the Castilian army, and the great battle of Ajubarrota was fought, in which the latter were defeated, and John of Castile was obliged to give up his pretensions.

1390. John, wishing to review some troops who had returned from Africa, was so taken up with the evolutions, after the fashion of the Saracens, that he applied spurs to his fiery charger, which having stumbled, threw him with great violence, and killed him, in the thirty-fourth year of his age. John was a prince beloved by his subjects. Henry the Third, commonly called the Invalid, was only eleven years when he succeeded his father. A regency was named, composed of the Archbishop of Toledo, the marquess of Villena, and other grandees ; who all contrived to impoverish the royal treasure by their spoliations. The reign of this sovereign was tranquil, and Castile enjoyed repose. Henry was an intelligent and good prince, but very delicate in health. He died shortly after his queen had given birth to a son and heir, at the early age of twenty-seven.

The Retributive Banquet.

“ Rien qui ne soit d’abord éclairé par les Dieux ;
Tout ce que l’homme fait, il le fait à leurs yeux,
Même les actions que dans l’ombre il croit faire.”

LA FONTAINE.

ROMANCE OF HISTORY.



THE RETRIBUTIVE BANQUET.



The Retributive Banquet.

KING HENRY the Third, surnamed the Invalid, was a prince of a most amiable disposition, and endowed with no ordinary mental qualifications. As he was but eleven years of age when he succeeded to the throne, a regency was appointed to conduct the affairs of the state during his minority. The Marquis of Villena, the Archbishop of Toledo and Santiago, and several other individuals of distinction, constituted this regency, and produced no little mischief and disorder in the state by their jealousies and cabals. The King, disgusted with the rapacity and intrigues of his grandees, no less than moved by repeated complaints from his people, determined to be no longer a sovereign in name alone, but to assume the reins of government in reality. Until then, his numerous tutors had sedulously endeavoured to keep him as unacquainted as possible with the affairs of the nation, and he was completely ignorant of the numerous acts of injustice, spoliation of the public revenue, and malversation of treasure, of which his nobles had been guilty.

Henry was very fond of music, and a passionate lover of the chase ; and, between these two pur-

suits, his days were chiefly passed: nor were those who governed in his name at all displeased that the mind of the King should be absorbed and his time taken up with these occupations, as they served to divert his thoughts from public affairs. But an event took place when he had scarcely reached his sixteenth year, which opened his eyes to the iniquitous and rapacious acts of his grantees, and prompted him to recall the power which they possessed in his name.

One day, the King, returning from shooting quails, his favourite pastime, came into his palace later than he was expected. He waited patiently for some time, in expectation of his dinner; but perceiving no sort of preparation, he ordered his page to inquire of his purveyor the cause of this unpardonable neglect. After a short time, the page returned, but appeared for some time unwilling to speak.

"Well, Fadrique," said the King, "what accident has happened in the palace that causes this delay? Has my purveyor or cook died suddenly?"

"No, please my Liege," answered the page; "but there is no dinner ready."

"By Santiago, this is scarcely excusable!" quoth Henry; "surely there is no need of much preparation, for my frugality is well known. Tell them to prepare any thing; but bid them make haste, for the chase has more than usually sharpened my appetite."

The page went back with these commands, and soon after returned, accompanied, not by a troop of servants laden with the dinner, but simply by the Majordomo, or steward, exhibiting a most dismal and lengthened visage.

“Our Lady defend us !” cried the King ; “what ails thee, Martos, that can bring thee into our presence with those woful looks ? Speak boldly, man ; why is my dinner not ready ?”

“I crave your *Alteza’s* forgiveness,” replied Martos, “but the dinner——”

“Well, the dinner — what’s become of the dinner ?” returned Don Henry, with a smile ; “has it all been devoured by the cats, or has it been spoiled by the cook ?”

The Majordomo gave an expressive shake of his head, which served as a prologue to his unwelcome intelligence —

“I am sorry to bring such bad information to my King, but there is nothing now in the palace to serve up for dinner.”

“Never mind,” resumed the King, good-humouredly, “any thing will do ; you know that, in this respect, I am not difficult to please. Now go, and observe my orders.”

But Martos, instead of going, most pertinaciously kept his ground, throwing at the same time additional solemnity into his already but too ominous looks.

“Señor,” he resumed, “there is not wherewithal

in the palace to prepare a meal for a boor, much less for the Sovereign of Castile ! We are totally unprovided, and ——”

“Well, by my troth,” cried the King, with a mixture of vexation and laughter, “such want of provision is inexcusable ! My dinners have all along been so very moderate and plain, that I could not expect they stood in need of much preparation. I do not think that any respectable citizen fares more homely than his sovereign ; and yet this poor meal cannot be had when it is called for ! It is singular, certainly ; but, as I must have something to eat, go and send me a slice of cold meat, with some vegetables.”

“I am deeply concerned, my Liege,” replied the evil-boding Majordomo, “but we have neither cold meat nor vegetables of any sort to lay on the table.”

“This is really curious !” observed the King ; “why, I suppose that if I were to ask for a crust of bread, I should run a chance of not obtaining it ?”

The silence of Martos very plainly told his master that he was just in his surmises.

“At all events, bid the cook prepare the game which I have brought from the chase : I suppose I can have that—unless, indeed, there is some magical process here that conspires against my dining.”

The King, whilst his meal was preparing, began to reflect deeply on the utter destitution exhibited

in his larder. Aware that many more secrets would come to light, he resolved to investigate the matter thoroughly, and learn what could be the real motive that produced such poverty in his household. When the game which he had given to the Majordomo was cooked, and the cloth laid, he observed, with no little surprise, that there were no servants whatever to wait upon him, the dinner being served up by the Majordomo and the cook himself.

"How's this?" cried Henry, with indignation; "where are all my lazy varlets? I have observed a decrease in their number every day; but surely some of them must be drunk — where are my servants?"

"They are gone, my Liege," said Martos, ruefully.

"Gone! — good Heavens! — where?" inquired the King; "are the ungrateful slaves so ill satisfied with my service, that they, of one accord, have resolved to quit the palace?"

"Alack, Señor," replied the steward, "the coffers of the royal revenue are so empty that your *Alteza* has not wherewithal to defray the expenses of your household. Your domestics for some time have not received a *maravedi* of their salaries, and they could not be persuaded to stay any longer."

The King could scarcely give credit to this information. He stared at the Majordomo, who, by

his dismal looks and gestures, strongly confirmed the truth of his assertions.

“I must look to these things a little closer,” said Henry, struggling to smother the feelings of indignation that swelled within his breast. “Since my good governors and tutors take such indifferent care of their charge, it is but meet I should exonerate them from further trouble, and provide for myself. The poverty of Castile must in sooth be dreadful, and my poor subjects are, no doubt, starving, since their sovereign cannot get a dinner, nor a servant to wait upon him.”

A sardonic grin from Martos, accompanied with a most expressive shake of his capacious head, indicated that he had strange things to communicate were he allowed the privilege to speak. The King observed the promise of his predictive countenance, and invited him to unfold any intelligence without restraint or fear.

“It is perchance a liberty, a great liberty in so insignificant a man as I am, to meddle with the affairs of great people, and give an opinion upon them; but I have strong reason to suppose that your *Alleza*’s tutors and governors carry on a regular system of plunder upon the royal treasure.”

“Ay,” interrupted the King, “of that I have myself for some time past entertained violent suspicions; but surely my grandees cannot carry their rapacious depredations so far as actually to starve me to death?”

“ I have a piece of intelligence, Señor,” resumed Martos, in a mysterious tone, “ that may throw much light upon the affair.”

“ Indeed ! relate it, then, without disguise.”

“ Well, my honoured prince, I know that a most splendid entertainment takes place this evening at the mansion of the Archbishop of Toledo, one of the regents, to which most of the principal grandees are invited.”

“ Most prudently arranged,” interrupted Henry with a smile of scorn and indignation. “ So while the King of Castile is actually without a dinner, his arrogant nobles are to be feasting at his expense ! Well, though unasked, I must attend the holy prelate’s supper. My retired habits, no doubt, make those worthy gentlemen suppose that I am withdrawn to rest after the fatigues of the chase ; but I shall deceive their hopes, and be present at the feast. Fadrique, get me ready a disguise, such as may serve a poor wandering minstrel ; and you, Martos, by means of the Archbishop’s steward, must procure me an introduction to the banquet.”

The project was no sooner conceived than put in execution. The King arrayed himself in his humble attire, took his guitar, and at the close of night bent his steps to the Archbishop’s mansion. He had previously despatched his faithful Majordomo to facilitate his reception at the feast, and, confiding both in the fidelity of Martos and the efficacy

of his own disguise, he arrived at the gates of the prelate's palace a little before the guests took their seats at the table. At the door the King heard the hurry and bustle of preparation, and from the crowd of servants that came in and out he surmised that the entertainment was one of unusual splendour. His indignation was strongly excited, but he resolved to probe the iniquitous conduct of his grandees to the last, and summon all his powers to his aid, that he might carry on his scheme without premature detection.

He began to prelude an air of exquisite taste to excite the curiosity of the revellers, who were indulging in the pleasures of the feast with a buzz of joyous talk intermingled with frequent bursts of laughter. The King's dulcet notes soon caught their attention, and they all seemed to approve the musician's skill.

"The melody is in good taste," quoth the Marquess of Villena; "I like it much, and I am accounted a fair judge in these things; for, as ye all know, my noble *Caballeros*, this department of the King's education has been under my care."

"By my honour," quoth Don Pedro de Mendoza, "I doubt whether the King himself, with all his musical talent, could compete with the minstrel at our door."

"Who is he?" demanded the prelate of his steward.

"A poor wandering musician, who is travelling

through Castile. He has been recommended to me by a friend, as a person of most astonishing skill in his art."

"That cannot be doubted," observed the Archbishop; "bring the man in, that we may judge better of his music."

This order was promptly obeyed, and the fictitious minstrel soon found himself in the presence of his feasting nobles. The King was struck, no less at the high tone of the guests, than at the magnificence of the banquet. The most costly delicacies were heaped upon the convivial board, and a crowd of attendants waited on the arrogant grantees. Don Henry took his station by a corner, from which he could minutely observe what was going forward, and hear the various remarks that fell from the lips of the company.

"Thy looks proclaim thee young," quoth the Archbishop; "and you have made good progress in the musical craft. Who art thou?"

"Alack!" answered the King, "most learned and reverend Señor, I am a poor, houseless orphan, reduced to the greatest want; indeed, good sirs, to-day I have not been blessed with a dinner."

"Poor youth," muttered the Archbishop. "Give him something to eat. Have you always been in this dependent state?"

"Oh! no, great sir; humble and insignificant as I now appear, I am of noble birth and parentage; but, unfortunately, my father died when I

was a child, and my tutors, instead of fulfilling conscientiously the duties of their charge, despoiled me of my inheritance, and reduced me to such destitution, that, as you see, good Señores, I am actually compelled to wander about in search of a meal : this is the truth, so help me God !”

“A very interesting youth,” observed Don Pedro de Mendoza, one of the greatest depredators of the King’s treasures ; “and it is shocking, indeed, to hear such an instance of injustice towards an orphan.”

“Heaven bless you, my honoured master,” returned the King, “for your benevolence and kindness ; but how much more will your generous feelings be kindled, when I tell you, that at the very time that I am depending upon the noble Archbishop’s bounty and charity for a meal, my cruel and sinful guardians are most prodigally feasting at my expense !”

“Holy Santiago keep me in his grace !” cried the conscientious prelate with warmth ; such unprincipled conduct ought to be visited by the indignation of God and man. What think you of it, my noble *Caballeros* ?”

“If the youth speaks truth in all,” said the Marquess of Villena, “a complaint ought to be presented to government, that the sufferer may be righted, and his wrongers punished.”

“Oh ! certainly,” observed Mendoza, “they

ought to be compelled to make full and ample restitution."

"In sooth, Don Pedro," returned the prelate, "it strikes me that would scarcely be punishment enough for the offenders. I do not think justice would be hard upon them, if their guilt were visited by confinement, or even death."

"Most reverend Señor," said the King, "with all due respect to your learning and conscience, perchance what you propose savours of severity."

"Not in the least," returned the Archbishop; "such is the sentence I would give, if I were to be the judge upon the occasion."

"May all the saints bless you, Señor!" cried Henry; "ere long, I shall appeal to you, that ample right may be done me."

The entertainment continued till a very advanced hour of night. During this time, the King had ample opportunity of getting a thorough knowledge of the profligacy and unprincipled conduct of his grandees. The excesses of the table were attended with profane sayings and loose buffooneries, unfitted to the place in which they were uttered, and strangely at variance with the conscientious pretensions of the Archbishop.

Thrown off their guard by the treachery of intoxicating liquids, the guests talked unreservedly of their schemes, and even made a boast of the rob-

beries which they had committed on the revenues of the state. Many a time the King, overpowered with indignation, felt an impulse to put away his disguise and confound the profligate courtiers ; but he conquered this temptation, in order to concert a fuller and more gratifying revenge. He sang and played during the entertainment, and at length withdrew, without having excited the smallest suspicion in the minds of the convivial circle.

On his return to the palace, Henry began to reflect upon some scheme which might deeply humiliate the delinquent nobles, and procure him ample reparation for his wrongs. From that moment he was confirmed in his previous resolution, of taking the reins of government into his own hands. A few days after the preceding event, he would complete his sixteenth year, and he chose that moment to carry his plans into effect. With this determination he retired to rest. On the morrow he sent a formal invitation to his grantees, spiritual and temporal, desiring them to assist in a grand entertainment with which it was his intention to treat his noble and distinguished friends, on his birthday. After this he took no further notice of the affair, but received the Archbishop, the Marquess of Villena, Mendoza, and the rest of the party, in the usual manner; not the remotest suspicion existing among them that their unjustifiable conduct was fully known to the King.

Henry's birth-day at length arrived, and the grantees most joyfully attended the royal invitation; indeed, they were very eager to see what entertainment could be prepared by the King, considering the indifferent state of his coffers. Perhaps a treasure had been discovered, or perhaps their lord had borrowed from the King of Aragon, or some other prince in Spain. But yet it puzzled Don Pedro de Mendoza amazingly, how, if there was a treasure, it had escaped from his clutches; or if a loan had been made, how his vigilance could have been eluded, to prevent his deriving any profit from the transaction. Henry had given circulation to various rumours concerning the splendour of the feast; and the grantees, leaving their surmises to be satisfied by the event, repaired to the palace on the wings of expectation.

As they gradually arrived, they were shown into one of the chambers, where they were to wait until they were all assembled, and the doors of the banqueting hall thrown open for their reception. The wished-for moment at length arrived. With much ceremony they were conducted to the saloon destined for the feast. But what was their amazement at the sight which offered itself to their eyes! Instead of a decorated saloon, they found one which was almost tenantless, from want not only of ornament, but even of the most indispensable furniture. A long unpolished deal table, with

benches of the same humble materials, were the only things in the room. The King himself, clad in complete armour, sat at the head of the homely board, which contained no food whatever, except a piece of hard coarse bread and a jug of water for each of the guests.

Henry, with much affability, desired the guests to take their seats, and to do justice to the fare he had prepared for them.

“It is perchance not dainty enough,” he said ; “but I know full well the extent of your attachment and fidelity to my person not to receive with content any favour, however humble, which comes from my hands.”

The grandees put on the best smiles they could command in so difficult a situation, and sitting round the table, used their endeavours to push down their rebellious throats the hard and unsavoury food placed before them. They were puzzled to make out the meaning of this singular scene ; but they had shrewdness enough to suspect that there was some mystery at the bottom. Again the good humour and affability of the King tempted them to imagine that the whole affair was a whim. Perhaps it was an exhibition emblematical of the self-denials and hard fare to which the ancient warriors had often been subjected ; and indeed the armour in which Henry was equipped, made the supposition probable.

The King meantime devoured his portion of the food, in which he was rather well imitated by his guests, considering the very difficult nature of the task.

“ I am afraid,” he then said, “ you have not found your repast to your satisfaction ; but I hope you may relish the second course much better.”

The announcement of a second course made the guests open their ears, and their eyes glistened with anticipation. They were confirmed in their surmises that the whole affair was a joke, to give zest to the feast which was in store for them. Under this impression they rose up and followed the King, who now conducted them to another apartment, where the second course of the dinner was said to be laid out. They entered the place, when, lo ! their countenances fell for the second time. Upon a view of the room, it appeared that the joke was prolonged ; and indeed, if the thing were a joke at all, it must be confessed to have been one of a most unpleasant and serious description. The place was hung with black, the light of day shut out, and the gloomy glimmer of two or three lamps substituted in its stead. Awful emblems of death were also visible on every side ; there was a long board covered with a black pall, supporting a coffin ; a large crucifix stood in front of it, and a skull, a friar’s habit, a book of prayer, and all the paraphernalia of death were dismally

exhibited to the astonished and chilled sight of the grandees.

The King now ordered the doors to be shut upon his guests, and in a firm and commanding voice proceeded to address them.

“ Behold the second course of your dinner ! but before I suffer your indulging in it, as well as in the dessert which is to crown the feast, I must put a few preliminary questions. You, Sir Archbishop, in due consideration of your exalted capacity and distinguished rank, are perhaps the most proper person to give the desired answers.”

After a short pause, he continued in a more austere tone—

“ Tell me now, truly, how many Kings have you known in Castile ?”

“ Why, please your Highness,” answered the bewildered prelate, “ I have known three : the great Don Henrique, of Trastamara, your grandsire ; your father Don Juan, and your gracious self.”

The King then put the same question to several others of the grandees, and they answered, two or three, according to their age. Henry, assuming an indignant frown, exclaimed—

“ For shame, *Caballeros* ! you prevaricate and deceive your sovereign : the eldest of you asserts that he has known three Kings of Castile only ; and how can this be, when I, who am so very much your inferior in years, have seen at least half a dozen ?”

The nobles looked more amazed than ever at this strange assertion; but their alarm visibly increased when they perceived that the frowns and powerful indignation of Don Henry precluded any remaining hope that the business could be a jest."

"Ay, sirs," he repeated, "I have seen six sovereigns of Castile; and you may easily conceive that the sight was not at all gratifying to me, who am considered to have some just pretensions to the crown. This number of Kings is rather prejudicial to the happiness of the Castilian dominions, and it would be much better for its prosperity and tranquillity if the whole power of the realm were invested in one sovereign, to the exclusion of the rest.

"To this distinction I think I possess a better claim than my partners in royalty. Let therefore the King Archbishop of Toledo, and the King Marquess of Villena, and the King Don Pedro de Mendoza, with the other remaining Kings, renounce their pretensions and abdicate immediately; or let them prepare to dispute the title, and abide the consequences of their temerity."

Saying this, he stamped fiercely with his foot, and a troop of armed knights rushed suddenly from behind the black hangings where they lay concealed.

"These," continued the King, "are some of

those true loyal knights who will support my claims."

The nobles looked confounded and aghast, and one by one began to frame speeches to soothe the mind of their sovereign, and all swore that if they had made any encroachment on the royal prerogatives, it was owing to excessive zeal and a desire to lighten their King from the burthen of public affairs.

But Henry, far from being conciliated by these specious phrases and feeble excuses, remained inflexible in his sternness. Indeed the mendacity of their protestations served only to irritate him the more, and the pardon which might have been granted to a free and candid confession, was rendered more difficult of attainment by paltry subterfuges devoid of all truth and foundation.

"Another point remains to be settled," resumed Henry. "You have seen the sort of entertainment I have prepared for you. It certainly cannot be compared in splendour to the one lately given by the Lord Archbishop of Toledo. In that, to me, ever-memorable banquet you may remember a certain orphan minstrel was present, whose wrongs you all volunteered to redress. I have taken the task upon myself, and, by the holy Santiago, and by my honour, I swear that the orphan shall have most ample reparation!"

The Archbishop and his companions were thun-

derstruck at these words ; they prudently abstained from opening their lips in vindication, but preserved a deep silence, in anxious suspense for the catastrophe of this drama. This indeed took place even sooner than they expected. The King made a sign, and a secret door was opened, from which a civil officer, a priest, and an executioner came forward : the ominous sight chilled the delinquent nobles with dismay. The black pall was partially removed, and the block and the axe were discovered to the view. Don Henry proceeded—

“Sirs, you are in the case of the orphan ; it is by your own sentence that you are condemned. First, then, you must sign a confession of your guilt, and a deed by which you give back to the rightful owner what your rapacity has usurped.”

These documents were quickly signed by the tutors.

“It now only remains,” resumed the King in a stern tone of voice, “to carry into effect the second part of the sentence pronounced by the Archbishop of Toledo. My lords, commend your souls to God and prepare for death.”

At these awful words the prelate and his horror-stricken companions immediately prostrated themselves at the feet of their offended sovereign, and, pleading guilty, endeavoured by their prayers to soften his heart and obtain pardon. The King, who, as we have already stated, had no particle of

cruelty in his disposition, and who perhaps had only meant to give a serious lesson to his nobles, after a short time relaxed from his imposing attitude, and released the culprits from their painful suspense.

“ You are forgiven,” he said, “ for I would not darken my birth-day with deeds of blood. But you shall remain in strict confinement until a full and satisfactory restitution is made to the crown of all your shameful spoliations. Those of my guests whom I have summoned here merely to be spectators of this scene and profit by the lesson, may depart in peace ; but those who formed the regency, and who have answered so shamefully to the trust reposed upon them, must be accompanied to prison by my faithful officers. There they shall remain until my just demands are satisfied. Now, retire.”

The friends and relatives of the imprisoned grandees were not slow in exerting themselves to obtain their liberation. The pious work of restitution was quickly carried into effect, many a rich domain was restored to the King, and many usurped revenues began again to replenish his coffers.

The foregoing act, in which so youthful a monarch presented such proofs of sagacity, prudence, and resolution, endeared him still further to his people. From that moment he reigned alone, respected, and without any shackles to impede his

operations. The dissensions of the nobles produced by his minority ceased, and the people were upon the whole content and tranquil, until the death of the King. Unfortunately the delicate and precarious health of Henry produced this melancholy event prematurely, and to the deep regret of his subjects.

King Henry the Third died at the early age of twenty-seven, leaving an infant son to inherit his crown.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME

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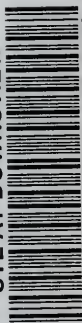
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